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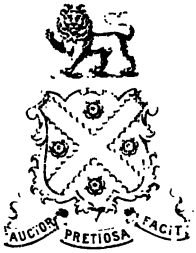

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Presented in 1878.

NCF

THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

WITH

HIS LIFE,

BY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

" High Chief of Scottish song!
That could'st alternately impart
Wisdom and rapture in thy page,
And brand each vice with satire strong:
Whose lines are mottoes of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage."

CAMPBELL.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

LONDON:

COCHRANE AND M'CRONE,
11, WATERLOO PLACE.

1834.

BAYLIS AND LEIGHTON,
JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET-STREET.

NOTICE.

With this volume closes the poetry of Burns. Along with his Letters, which are numerous and interesting, will be printed his observations on Scottish Song, enlivened by occasional snatches of original and amended verse. In arranging the lyrics and letters addressed to Thomson, the Editor has introduced various songs in the order of their composition, which were written for other purposes or publications. He has also supplied some information respecting the heroines of the Poet's latter strains; and ventured, too, to insert, now and then, an anecdote or a remark on lyric composition. Nor is it without satisfaction that he sees he has kept his word with the public in an important point.—In the announcement of the work, one hundred and odd pieces of verse more than Currie's octavos contained, were promised; he has been enabled to give nearly one hundred and fifty. Some of these, too, are long poems; and, among the songs, will be found many exhibiting Burns in his happiest humour and finest pathos.

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There was a bonnie lass .....
There was lass and she was fair .....
There was once a day, but old Time then was young .....
Thine am I, my faithful fair .....
Thou hast left me ever, Jamie .....
'Tis friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend .....
'Twas na her bonnie blue een was my ruin .....
True hearted was he the sad swain o' the Yarrow .....
When o'er the hill the eastern star .....
When wild war s deadly blast was blawn .....
Where are the joys I hae met in the morning .....
While larks with little wing .....
Why, why tell thy lover .....
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary? .....
Wilt thou be my dearie .....
Ye banks and braes and streams around .....
You're welcome to despots, Dumourier .....

SONGS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE.

We come now to the correspondence between Burns and Thomson on the subject of northern music and song. In the autumn of 1792 the latter planned his truly elegant and adventurous work, entitled: "A select Collection of original Scottish Airs; to which are added Symphonies and Accompaniments by Pleyel and Kozeluck, with characteristic Verses by the most esteemed Scottish Poets;" and as Burns was the only poet of that period worthy of the name, he was instantly applied to. He had, as has been amply shewn in the last volume, contri-

buted largely to the "Musical Museum" of Johnson, and was still composing for it: the work of Thomson presented something more worthy of his ambition, and he promised his aid with an enthusiasm and alacrity peculiar to himself. The songs were all to be published with the names of the authors; and as the new lyrics were sure to be compared with those which they superseded, there was a twofold claim upon the Poet for his purest and happiest musings.

"The undertaking of Thomson," says Currie, "is one on which the public may be congratulated in various points of view; not merely as having collected the finest of the Scottish songs and airs of past times, but as having given occasion to a number of original songs of our Bard, which equal or surpass the former efforts of the pastoral muses of Scotland; and which, if we mistake not, may be safely compared with the lyric poetry of any age or country. The letters of Burns to Thomson include the songs he presented to him, some of which appear in different stages of their progress; and these letters will be found to exhibit occasionally his notions of song writing, and his opinions on various

subjects of taste and criticism. These opinions, it will be observed, were called forth by the observations of his correspondent; and without the letters of the latter, those of Burns would have been often unintelligible."

The reasons which influenced Currie in printing the letters of Thomson along with those of the Poet are equally strong now. The opinions of Burns, though generally given spontaneously, were now and then forced from him by the criticisms of his friend. It may be remarked, generally, that the former always thought and felt as a poet—the latter as a musician; one was chiefly solicitous about the weight of the sense—the other about the beauty of the sound. The changes which "Wandering Willie" and the "Address of Bruce to his troops" underwent will bear out this remark, and perhaps induce some to wonder how one so fiery and intractable in most matters should have become so soft and mild to fiddlers and bagpipers. The poetry which is written for music must, it is true, be measured in another way than that which is for perusal only. The emphatic notes of the music must find an echo in the emphatic words of

the verse; and words soft and liquid are far fitter for ladies' lips than words rough and hissing. It is nevertheless certain that language at once emphatic and harmonious is not easily summoned into lyric verse; and it is quite as true that, in substituting a melodious for a harsher word, the sentiment is often crushed out by the experiment. A certain happiness of language as well as of thought is demanded by the lyric muse, and no one had this in greater perfection than Burns—a truth which the reader will easily discover for himself in the course of the ensuing correspondence.

No. I.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, September, 1792.

SIR:

FOR some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favorite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence, some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of the "Cotter's Saturday Night;" and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection, infinitely more interesting than any that has yet

appeared, and acceptable to all persons of whether they wish for correct melodies, de accompaniments, or characteristic verses.—W esteem your poetical assistance a particular fa besides paying any reasonable price you shall p to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary sideration with us, and we are resolved to neither pains nor expense on the publication. me frankly, then, whether you will devote leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five s suited to the particular melodies which I am pre to send you. A few songs, exceptionable o some of their verses, I will likewise submit to consideration; leaving it to you, either to these, or make new songs in their stead. It perfluous to assure you that I have no intenti displace any of the sterling old songs; those will be removed which appear quite silly or lutely indecent. Even these shall be all examin Mr. Burns, and if he is of opinion that any of are deserving of the music, in such cases no di shall take place.

G. THOMSO

No. II.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 16th Sept. 1792.

SIR:

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak the hindmost" is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me? You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers to approve or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos, if you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can

only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. "Tweedside!"—"Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate!"—"Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit," &c. you cannot mend: but such insipid stuff as "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c. usually set to "The Mill, Mill, O!" is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself, at least, think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright prostitution of soul! A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, "Gude speed the wark!"

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

[At the time of the commencement of this correspondence, Scottish songs were but little regarded. Ramsay's Miscellany was deformed by innumerable vulgarities: Herd's collection, though curious, was chiefly interesting to the antiquary; and Johnson's Museum, great as its merits were, both in verse and music, had not become popular. Thomson perceived this, and set about supplying the deficiency with considerable taste and skill. His chief ally was Burns,—for who can praise his discernment in desiring Wolcot to write words for northern airs? In music Pleyel ranks high, but no one can help feeling that his symphonies and accompaniments now and then encumber the music they were intended to adorn. The extreme simplicity of our northern airs is hurt by these embellishments, as a Doric temple would be injured by a Corinthian portico, or the Venus de Medici with bracelets of gold and diamonds on her arms, and drops at her ears.—ED.]

No. III.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 13th Oct. 1792.

DEAR SIR:

I RECEIVED with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year, more and more, the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but, if we can select a few excellent ones suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, "My Nannie, O," which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, "While some for pleasure pawn their health," answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, "O Nancy wilt thou go

with me," that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses: you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and, moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits: simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but, in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting, indeed, in all songs than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and, at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection; and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.—I remain, dear Sir, &c.

No. IV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR:

LET me tell you, that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have, all but one, the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance, on reading over the "The Lea-rig," I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough:—

MY AIN KIND DEARIE O.

I.

When o'er the hill the eastern star,
  Tells bughtin-time is near, my jo;
And owsen frae the furrow'd field,
  Return sae dowf and weary, O;
Down by the burn, where scented birks*
  Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo;
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
  My ain kind dearie O!

* For "scented birks," in some copies, "birken buds."

II.

In mirkest glen, at midnight hour,
I'd rove, and ne'er be eerie, O;
If thro' that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie O!
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wild,
And I were ne'er sae wearie, O,
I'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O!

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ıllad to the air, "Nannie, O," is just. It is bedes, perhaps, the most beautiful ballad in the nglish language. But let me remark to you, that the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may ıll the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to hich a dash of our native tongue and manners is articularly, nay peculiarly, apposite. For this ɜason, and, upon my honour, for this reason alone, am of opinion (but, as I told you before, my opiion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject, as ou please) that my ballad of "Nannie, O!" might erhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now ion't let it enter into your head, that you are under ny necessity of taking my verses. I have long go made up my mind as to my own reputation in he business of authorship; and have nothing to be leased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection, f my verses. Though you should reject one half f what I give you, I shall be pleased with your

adopting the other half, and shall continue to se you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my "Nannie, O," name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the i of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreea modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more rema on this business; but I have just now an oppo nity of conveying you this scrawl, free of post an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my l compliments to honest Allan, Gude be wi' ye, &

Friday Night.

["In the copy transmitted to Mr. Thomson, inst of *wild*, was inserted *wet*. But in one of the ma scripts, probably written afterwards, wet was changed wild—evidently a great improvement. The lovers m meet on the lea-rig, "although the night were ne'e *wild*," that is, although the summer-wind blew, the lowered, and the thunder murmured: such circumsta might render their meeting still more interesting. if the night were actually wet, why should they mee the lea-rig? On a wet night, the imagination car contemplate their situation there with any complace —Tibullus, and after him Hammond, has conceive happier situation for lovers on a wet night. Prob Burns had in his mind the verse of an old Scottish s in which *wet* and *weary* are naturally enough conjoin

'When my ploughman comes hame at ev'n,
He 's often wet and weary;
Cast off the wet, put on the dry,
And gae to bed my deary.'"—CURRIE.]

Saturday Morning.

As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you "Nannie, O!" at length.

Your remarks on "Ewe-bughts, Marion," are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of "Ewe-bughts;" but it will fill up this page. You must know that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

TO MARY CAMPBELL.

I.

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?

II.

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

III.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me
When I forget my vow!

IV.

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

V.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join;
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour and the moment o' time!

"Galla Water," and "Auld Rob Morris," I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniâtreté*, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work.

No. V.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

November 8th, 1792.

you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I said you will find more difficulty in the under- than you are aware of. There is a peculiar mus in many of our airs, and a necessity of ing syllables to the emphasis, or what I would he feature-notes of the tune, that cramp the and lay him under almost insuperable diffi-s. For instance, in the air, "My wife's a n wee thing," if a few lines smooth and can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. following were made extempore to it; and h, on farther study, I might give you some- more profound, yet it might not suit the horse gallop of the air so well as this random :—

THE WINSOME WEE THING.

I.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

II.

I never saw a fairer,
I never lo'ed a dearer;
And niest my heart I'll wear her,
For fear my jewel tine.

III.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

IV.

The warld's wrack we share o't,
The warstle and the care o't;
Wi' her I'll blythly bear it,
And think my lot divine.

I have just been looking over the "Colli
bonny Dochter;" and if the following rhaps
which I composed the other day, on a charn
Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillie (afterwards
Cuming, of Logie), as she passed through this p
to England, will suit your taste better than
"Collier Lassie,"—fall on and welcome:—

BONNIE LESLEY.

I.

O saw ye bonnie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

II.

To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And never made anither!

III.

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee:
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

IV.

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

V.

The powers aboon will tent thee;
Misfortune sha' na steer thee:
Thou'rt like themselves so lovely,
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

VI.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag, we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonnie.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into your hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour.—Farewell, &c.

[The Poet in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated August, 1792, describes the influence which the beauty of Miss Lesley Baillie exercised over his imagination.—"Know then," said he, "that the heart-struck awe, the distant humble approach, the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse polluted far inferior sons of men, to deliver

to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour. Mr. Baillie, with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago on their way to England, did me the honour of calling on me: on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time,) and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and riding home, I composed the following ballad."

It is to be hoped that Mr. Findlater will read this note, and feel that when he charged the editor with misrepresentation, he was, in fact, accusing Burns. If the Poet had no horse while he lived in Dumfries, as the supervisor avers, how came he to mount one and ride to Annan with Miss Lesley Baillie? His words are plain and to the point; and the editor must continue to believe that Burns mounted his horse, though it has pleased Mr. Findlater to say otherwise.—ED.]

No. VI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Tune—"*Katharine Ogie.*"

I.

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

II.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary!

III.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!—
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

IV.

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips
I aft hae kissed sae fondly!
And clos'd for ay the sparkling glance,
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly—
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary!

14th November, 1792.

My Dear Sir:

I agree with you that the song, "Katharine Ogie," is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it; but the awkward sound, Ogie, recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song

pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest n
ner: you will see at first glance that it suits
air. The subject of the song is one of the most
teresting passages of my youthful days; and I
that I should be much flattered to see the ve
set to an air which would ensure celebrity.
haps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of
heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the m
of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of "Auld
Morris." I have adopted the two first verses,
am going on with the song on a new plan, w
promises pretty well. I take up one or ano
just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bor
lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what
you choose of the productions.—Adieu, &c.

[In the notes to "My Highland Lassie, O," and
Mary in Heaven," as well as in the Life of Burns,
little has been said of Mary Campbell, of whose lovel
and too early death the Poet sung with so much b
and pathos. More, and much that is interesting, c
added: my friend, John Kerr, Esq., writer in Glas
has communicated the following particulars :—

"The parents of Highland Mary lived in Gree
and she crossed the firth of Clyde to visit some rela
in Cowal, previous to her marriage. Her father
mariner; had two sons, Archibald and Robert;
besides Mary, a daughter, named Anne, who ma
James Anderson, a stonemason. All these indivi

are now dead: Mary was not long outlived by her father and brothers: her mother died in great poverty in the year 1828. The representatives of Highland Mary, therefore, now consist of Anderson's children—two sons and two daughters. Mary, it appears, was not hurried to the grave immediately after her return from Cowal: she lived several weeks with her father, and every week received a letter from her lover. The circumstance of a girl in her humble condition receiving a letter weekly excited the curiosity of the neighbours: the secret was carefully hunted out, and one of the gossips informed her father and mother that Mary was in the habit of receiving letters from a person named Burns, who was known to be a strange character, and 'a great scoffer at women.' Mary was questioned on the subject, and admitted the correspondence, laughing heartily at the description of her lover, whose scoffing, she said, she was ready to trust to. After this, Mary was allowed to receive her letters openly: one of them, it appears, contained the song of 'The Highland Lassie, O;' for her mother got it by heart from the Poet's correspondence, and, in her declining years, soothed her grand-children with strains which recorded the charms of her favourite daughter.

"It is to be regretted that none of these letters are now in existence. After Mary's death, her father disliked all allusions to her or to her lover; and when Burns wrote a moving letter, requesting some memorial of her he loved so dearly, the stern old man neither answered it, nor allowed any one to speak about it in his presence. His grand-children can sing some scraps of the songs which he wrote in praise of their aunt; and these, save the Bible presented to her by the Poet, are all that the rela-

tives of Highland Mary have to bear testimony of the love that was between her and Burns.

"Before the 'last farewell,' commemorated in the song of 'Highland Mary,' was taken, the lovers plighted mutual faith, and, exchanging Bibles, stood with a running stream between, and, lifting up its waters in their hands, vowed love while the woods of Montgomery grew and its waters ran. The spot where this took place is still pointed out. Mary's Bible was of the commonest kind, and consisted of one volume only—that of Burns was elegantly bound, and consisting of two volumes. In the first volume he had written,—'And ye shall not swear by my name falsely—I am the Lord. Levit. chap. xix., v. 12.'—In the second—'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oath. St. Matth. chap v., v. 33;' and on a blank leaf of both volumes, 'Robert Burns, Mossgiel.' By the death of Mary, this Bible came into the possession of her mother, who, about twelve years ago, gave it to her only surviving daughter, Mrs. Anderson. The circumstance of its being in two volumes seemed, at one period, to threaten its dismemberment; for, upwards of five years since, Mrs. Anderson presented a volume to each of her two daughters; but on the approaching marriage of these two females sometime afterwards, her eldest son, William Anderson, a mason in Renton, prevailed upon each of his sisters to dispose of the volumes they had received to him; and thus both volumes, once more united, now remain in the custody of the senior nephew of Highland Mary. The sacred verses we have quoted above remain in the bold, distinct hand-writing of the Poet; but his signature, on the opposite leaves, is almost wholly obliterated. In the

first volume, a masonic emblem, drawn by Burns, below his signature, is in complete preservation. Mr. William Anderson is also possessed of a pretty large lock of his aunt, Highland Mary's hair, a portion of which he presented to us, as a relic of the Bard's first love.

"We now come to another era in the history of this Bible. Mr. Archibald, schoolmaster in Largs, an admirer of Burns, and a votary of the Scottish muse, waited, it is said, on old Widow Campbell, some time before her death, for the purpose of purchasing the volumes. He learnt, however, that she was a pauper on the roll of the Kirk Session of Greenock, who, in consequence, were entitled to take possession of her little property as soon as death removed her from this world; but in the mean time, to secure a right to them, he is said to have bargained with her that he should become the possessor of the volumes when that event took place, at such a price as might be agreed upon between him and the Session. In February last, Mr. Archibald having heard that the Bible had found its way into the custody of one of the elders, presented a memorial to the Session:—

"'Your Memorialist will not presume to dictate to your Reverend Body what you may or ought to do with the Bible. He takes leave, however, to say, that if you do not see fit to retain them as public property, estimable to the people of Greenock, in consequence of the historical circumstances connected with these volumes, having been within their locality, he, the Memorialist, will be proud to be one of those who will gladly come forward to offer you a handsome sum of money for behoof of the poor, for the possession of the Sacred Pledges of Burns' purest affection. He has no doubt that many will compete with him in the generous strife of obtaining the

books, and that, if you see fit in this way to raise it, a considerable sum may be realized for the necessities of the poor.'

"On this memorial the Session pronounced the following judgment upon it :—

"'The Kirk Session of the Old Parish of Greenock, with their Heritors, being met—*inter alia*, the Kirk Treasurer laid before the meeting a letter from Mr. Joseph J. Archibald, teacher at Largs, containing an offer of £10. for the effects (including furniture, books, &c. &c.) left by Widow Campbell, mother to Burns' Highland Mary, which effects became the property of the Kirk Session, in consequence of the said Widow Campbell being, for several years, a pauper on their roll. The Session agreed to resign their hypothec in said effects to and in favour of the said Mr. Joseph J. Archibald, for the aforesaid sum of £10. and authorize their clerk to intimate this to him.'

"Notwithstanding the grave and formal tenor of this resolution, we suspect that the Bible is the unquestionable property of its present possessor, and if the account we have received of his character and conduct approach the truth, he is well worthy of remaining their custodier in perpetuity."]

No. VII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, Nov. 1792.

DEAR SIR:

I WAS just going to write to you, that on meeting with your Nannie, I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the "Lea-rig" is so short; the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing: so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very Flowers of English Song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe, my plan is, that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the "Ewe-bughts" is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently

no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length, though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit: that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on "Bonnie Lesley:" it is a thousand times better than the "Collier's Lassie." "The deil he cou'd na scaith thee," &c. is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander, sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonia, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song—"My Wife's a Winsome wee Thing," I think the first eight lines very good: but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verses. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or, as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way:—

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blithsome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing,
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' warld's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't,
Wi' her I'll blithely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty, which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured, it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what, perhaps, you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the reperusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.—I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P. S. Your verses upon "Highland Mary" are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. VIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st Dec. 1792.

Your alterations of my "Nannie, O," are perfectly right. So are those of "My Wife's a winsome wee thing." Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterises our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter "Bonnie Lesley." You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of Scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

> "For nature made her what she is,
> And never made anither." (Such a person as she is.)

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than "Ne'e made sic anither." However, it is immaterial make it either way. "Caledonie," I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished though it is sanctioned in three or four instance by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The "Lea-rig" is as follows.—(Here the Poe gives the first two stanzas as before, pp. 12, 13 with the following in addition :—)

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;
At noon the fisher seeks the glen,
Along the burn to steer, my jo;
Gie me the hour o' gloamin gray,
It maks my heart sae cheery, O,
To meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O!

I am interrupted. Yours, &c.

[The original reading of the second verse in "Bonnie Lesley," the reader will observe is restored in the text. Thomson decided in favour of the prosaic line,

"And ne'er made sic anither;"

rejecting the more poetic one,

"And never made anither."

Burns often adopted emendations in which his judgment did not concur, because they were pressed by his correspondent, to whose skill in the art of adapting words to music he looked with great confidence.—ED.]

No. IX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS.

I.

THERE's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king o' guid fellows and wale of auld men
He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine,
And ae bonnie lassie, his darling and mine.

II.

She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
She's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as the lamb on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

III.

But oh! she's an heiress,—auld Robin's a laird,
And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard
A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed;
The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead

IV.

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane
The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane:
I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist,
And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

V.

O had she but been of a lower degree,
I then might hae hop'd she wad smil'd upon me!
O, how past descriving had then been my bliss,
As now my distraction no words can express!

[The first two lines are taken from a song of considerable merit published in Ramsay's Miscellany: it is of a dramatic character:—

MITHER.

"Auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king of good fellows and wale of auld men;
Has fourscore of black sheep, and fourscore too,
Auld Rob Morris is the man ye maun lo'e.

DOUGHTER.

"Haud your tongue, mither, and let that abee,
For his eild, and my eild, can never agree;
They'll never agree, and that will be seen,
For he is fourscore, and I'm but fifteen.

MITHER.

"Tho' auld Rob Morris be an elderly man,
Yet his auld brass it will buy a new pan;
Then doughter ye shouldna be sae ill to shoo,
For auld Rob Morris is the man ye maun lo'e.

DOUGHTER.

"But auld Rob Morris I never will hae,
His back is sae stiff, and his beard is grown gray;
I had titter die than live with him a year,
Sae mair of Rob Morris I never will hear."

The old song is sarcastic: that of Burns is tender; the tune and the starting lines seem only to have been present to his fancy, when he took up the subject of the daughter of Rob Morris.—ED.]

DUNCAN GRAY.

I.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe yule night when we were fou,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

II.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

III.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Slighted love is sair to bide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die?
She may gae to—France for me!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

IV.

How it comes let doctors tell,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings;
And O, her een, they spak sic things!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

V.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Maggie's was a piteous case,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Duncan could na be her death,
Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
Now they're crouse and canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

4th December, 1792.

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your etter judgment. Acquit them or condemn them s seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is

that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

[This song has nothing in common with the old wild song of "Duncan Gray," save the first line, and a part of the third; nor is it much akin to a song concerning the same hero published in the fourth volume. It is a great favourite, from its lively air and clever words: Wilkie made one of his best pictures out of these lines:—

"Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;
Ha! ha! the wooing o't."

The heroine as well as the hero was imaginary; but the experience of the Poet would have supplied him readily, had invention failed.—ED.]

No. X.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

SONG.

Tune—"*I had a Horse.*"

I.

O POORTITH cauld, and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
An' 'twere na' for my Jeanie.
O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune's shining?

II.

This warld's wealth when I think on,
Its pride, and a' the lave o't—
Fie, fie on silly coward man,
That he should be the slave o't!

III.

Her een sae bonnie blue betray
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword ay,
She talks of rank and fashion.

IV.

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?

V.

How blest the humble cotter's fate!*
He woes his simple dearie;
The silly bogles, wealth and state,
Can never make them eerie.
O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love
Depend on Fortune's shining?

[Jean Lorimer of Kemmis-hall, in Kirkmahoe, was the heroine of this exquisite song. It is plain that the Poet looked upon her with the same eyes that a painter looks upon a model: her beauty of face and elegance of form—

"Her dimpled chin and cherry mou'—"

her ready wit, and her natural gaiety—her taste in song, and her skill in the dance, all united in endearing her to one whose muse caught inspiration from the presence of youth and beauty.—ED.]

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* "The wild-wood Indian's fate," in the original MS.

GALLA WATER.

I.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braes nor Ettrick shaws
Can match the lads o' Galla Water.

II.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I lo'e him better;
And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
The bonnie lad o' Galla Water.

III.

Altho' his daddie was nae laird,
And tho' I hae nae meikle tocher;
Yet rich in kindest, truest love,
We'll tent our flocks by Galla Water.

IV.

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O that's the chiefest warld's treasure!

Jan. 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? will these two foregoing be of any service to you? I should like to know what songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade, and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much-valued Cunningham, greet him, in my name, with the compliments of the season.

Yours, &c.

[The Poet had in his thoughts an old song which he brushed up for the Museum when he composed these verses. The feeling of the old so fairly mastered him, that in the third verse he has been careless in the matter of rhyme, and contented himself with something like equality of sound. The Galla rises in Mid-Lothian, unites with Heriot Water, and passing Galashiels, is lost in the Tweed, near Abbotsford. It has long flowed in the light of song and romance :—

"Lothian lads are black wi' reek,
Teviot-dale is little better;
But let them a' say what they will,
The gree gangs ay down Galla Water."—ED.]

No. XI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, Jan. 20, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured me for "Auld Rob Morris," "Duncan Gray," "Galla Water," and "Cauld Kail," are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will endear him to every body.

The distracted lover in "Auld Rob," and the happy shepherdess in "Galla Water," exhibit an excellent contrast: they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was limited, but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing; leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings;

the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler, of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than any body; for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c., of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose

adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing, or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on anything of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called "The Lass of Lochroyan," which I do not admire. I have set down the air, therefore, as a creditor of yours. Many of the jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour: might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

POSTSCRIPT.

FROM THE HON. A. ERSKINE.

MR. THOMSON has been so obliging as to
me a perusal of your songs. "Highland Mar
most enchantingly pathetic, and "Duncan (
possesses native genuine humour: "Spak o' lc
o'er a linn," is a line of itself that should mak
immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our m
friend Cunningham, who is a most excellent fe
and possesses above all men I know the charm
most obliging disposition. You kindly promise
about a year ago, a collection of your unpubl
productions, religious and amorous; I know
experience how irksome it is to copy. If you
get any trusty person in Dumfries to write
over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever mon
asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not b
your confidence.

I am your hearty admirer,

ANDREW ERSKIN

No. XII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

26th January, 1793.

APPROVE greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On part. I mean to draw up an appendix to the or's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's lotes I have by me, taken down in the course of cquaintance with him, from his own mouth. I ich an enthusiast, that in the course of my seve- regrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgri- to the individual spot from which every song its rise, "Lochaber" and the "Braes of Bal- n" excepted. So far as the locality, either from itle of the air, or the tenor of the song, could scertained, I have paid my devotions at the cular shrine of every Scots muse.

lo not doubt but you might make a very valu- collection of jacobite songs, but would it give fence? In the mean time, do not you think some of them, particularly "The Sow's Tail to die," as an air, with other words, might be worth a place in your collection of lively songs? it were possible to procure songs of merit, it d be proper to have one set of Scots words to air, and that the set of words to which the

notes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and, I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His "Gregory" is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

LORD GREGORY.

I.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wanderer seeks thy tow'r,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door!

II.

An exile frae her father's ha',
And a' for loving thee;
At least some pity on me shaw,
If love it may na be.

III.

Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove,
By bonnie Irwin-side,
Where first I own'd that virgin-love
I lang, lang had denied?

IV.

How aften didst thou pledge and vow
Thou wad for ay be mine;
And my fond heart, itsel' sae true,
It ne'er mistrusted thine.

V.

Hard is thy heart, Lord Gregory,
And flinty is thy breast—
Thou dart of heaven that flashest by,
O wilt thou give me rest!

VI.

Ye mustering thunders from above,
Your willing victim see!
But spare and pardon my fause love,
His wrangs to heaven and me!

["Fair Annie of Lochroyan," the ballad which Thomson says he does not admire, is one of the most beautiful compositions in the language: neither the song of Burns, nor the verses of Wolcot, equal it. There are many versions, and all are good: here are two of the stanzas:—

"Sweet Annie built a bonnie ship,
And set her on the sea,
The sails were of the damask'd silk,
The masts of silver free:
The gladsome waters sung below,
The sweet winds sung above,
Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
She comes to seek her love!

"A gentle wind came with a sweep,
And stretched her silken sail,
When up there came a reaver rude,
With many a shout and hail:
O! touch her not, my mariners a',
Such loveliness goes free;
Make way for Annie of Lochroyan,
She seeks Lord Gregorie!"

Those who are intimate with ballad lore will b
prised to hear that Wolcot complained, with mi
oath, that Burns sought to rob him of the original
of Lord Gregory. His song was, indeed, compose
but the idea of both is borrowed from the old
Here is Wolcot's version :—

LORD GREGORY.

"Ah ope, Lord Gregory, thy door,
A midnight wanderer sighs,
Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
And lightnings cleave the skies.

"Who comes with woe at this drear night—
A pilgrim of the gloom?
If she whose love did once delight,
My cot shall yield her room.

"Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
That once was priz'd by thee:
Think of the ring by yonder burn
Thou gav'st to love and me.

"But should'st thou not poor Marian know,
I'll turn my feet and part;
And think the storms that round me blow
Far kinder than thy heart."

In pathetic simplicity, both of language and th
neither of the rival lyrists equalled the nameles
strel.—Ed.]

No. XIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.

Tune—"*Bide ye yet.*"

I.

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see
That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blithely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

II.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard or saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

III.

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

MY DEAR SIR:

The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot bear rivalship from you, nor any body else.

["Of all the productions of Burns," says Hazlitt, "the pathetic and serious love-songs which he has left behind him in the manner of the old ballads, are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to Mary Morison, those entitled 'Jessy,' and the song beginning 'O, my love is like a red, red rose.'"—ED.]

No. XIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

March, 1793.

WANDERING WILLIE.

I.

HERE awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

II.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear in my e'e:
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

III.

Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers!
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms!
Awaken ye breezes, blow gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

IV.

But if he's forgotten his faithfullest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain!

I leave it to you, my dear Sir, to determine whether the above, or the old "Thro' the lang muir," be the best.

[The idea of "Wandering Willie" is taken from an old song published by Herd, which commences in these words:—

"Here awa, there awa, here awa, Willie,
Here awa, there awa, here awa hame;
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I hae gotten my Willie again.

"Through the lang muir I have followed my Willie,
Through the lang muir I have followed him hame,
Whatever betide us, nought shall divide us,
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain."

Older words than these may still be heard "lilted" by a shepherd lad or lass on a pasture hill, or in some sequestered glen:—

"Gin that ye meet my love, kiss her and clap her,
An' gin ye meet my love, dinna think shame;
O gin ye meet my love, kiss her and daut her,
And show her the way to haud awa hame."

The heroine of the "Wandering Willie" of Burns is said to have been the lovely and accomplished Mrs. Riddell.—ED.]

No. XV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, OH!

WITH ALTERATIONS.

I.

Oh, open the door, some pity to show,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh!*
Tho' thou has been false, I'll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh!

II.

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But caulder thy love for me, Oh!
The frost that freezes the life at my heart,
Is nought to my pains frae thee, Oh!

III.

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, Oh!
False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
I'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, Oh!

IV.

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide;
She sees his pale corse on the plain, Oh!
My true love! she cried, and sank down by his side,
Never to rise again, Oh!

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

* This second line was originally—"If love it may na be, Oh!"

No. XVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

JESSIE.

Tune—"*Bonnie Dundee.*"

I.

TRUE hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr,
But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair:
To equal young Jessie seek Scotland all over;
To equal young Jessie you seek it in vain;
Grace, beauty, and elegance fetter her lover,
And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

II.

O, fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily at evening close;
But in the fair presence o' lovely young Jessie
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose,
Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring;
Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law:
And still to her charms she alone is a stranger—
Her modest demeanour's the jewel of a'!

[Jessie Staig, the heroine of this song, married Major Miller, the second son of the Laird of Dalswinton. She died in early life, and is still affectionately remembered in her native valley;—the memory of beauty and gentleness is long passing away.—ED.]

No. XVII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 2nd April, 1793.

VILL not recognize the title you give yourself, prince of *indolent* correspondents ;" but if the tive were taken away, I think the title would fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of ongs : these will be a literary curiosity.

now send you my list of the songs, which I ve will be found nearly complete. I have put the first lines of all the English songs which pose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. ny others occur to you, better adapted to the acter of the airs, pray mention them, when you ur me with your strictures upon every thing relating to the work.

leyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, his symphonies and accompaniments added to . I wish you were here, that I might serve ome of them to you with your own verses, by of dessert after dinner. There is so much de- ful fancy in the symphonies, and such a deli- simplicity in the accompaniments : they are, ed, beyond all praise.

am very much pleased with the several last uctions of your muse : your " Lord Gregory,"

in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is. Your "Here awa, Willie," must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal.

[Thomson and Erskine, it seems, sat in judgment upon "Wandering Willie," and, in harmonizing it to the air, squeezed much of the poetic spirit out:—they re-produced it in these words:—

"Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

"Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, so Willie to me.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Blow soft ye breezes! roll gently ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

"But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us thou dark-heaving main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While dying I think that my Willie's my ain."

Burns, with his usual judgment, adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others. The last edition is as follows:—

"Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

"Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Wauken ye breezes, row gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

"But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us thou wide-roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain."

Several of the alterations," says Currie, "seem to little importance in themselves, and were adopted, y be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words r to the music. The Homeric epithet for the sea, heaving, suggested by Mr. Erskine, is in itself more iful, as well, perhaps, as more sublime, than wide- ng, which he has retained; but as it is only appli- to a placid state of the sea, or at most to the swell n its surface after the storm is over, it gives a pic- of that element not so well adapted to the ideas of al separation which the fair mourner is supposed to ecate. From the original song of 'Here awa, ie,' Burns has borrowed nothing but the second nd part of the first. The superior excellence of this iful poem will, it is hoped, justify the different edi- of it which we have given."—Ed.]

No. XVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

THE POOR AND HONEST SODGER.

Air—"*The Mill, Mill, O.*"

I.

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning;
I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor and honest sodger.

II.

A leal, light heart was in my breast,
My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy.

III.

At length I reach'd the bonny glen,
Where early life I sported;
I pass'd the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

IV.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I, sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be
That 's dearest to thy bosom:
My purse is light, I've far to gang,
And fain wad be thy lodger;
I've serv'd my king and country lang—
Take pity on a sodger.

V.

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me,
And lovelier was than ever;
Quo' she, a sodger ance I lo'ed,
Forget him shall I never:
Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
Ye freely shall partake it,
That gallant badge—the dear cockade—
Ye 're welcome for the sake o't.

VI.

She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like onie lily;
She sank within my arms, and cried
Art thou my ain dear Willie?
By him who made yon sun and sky—
By whom true love's regarded,
I am the man; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded!

VII.

The wars are o'er, and I'm come hame,
And find thee still true-hearted;
Tho' poor in gear, we're rich in love,
And mair we'se ne'er be parted.
Quo' she, my grandsire left me gowd,
A mailen plenish'd fairly;
And come, my faithful sodger lad,
Thou'rt welcome to it dearly!

VIII.

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honour;
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger;
Remember he's his country's stay,
In day and hour of danger.

[The air of this song and some of the words incline me to believe that Burns had "The mill, mill, O!" of Allan Ramsay in his mind, when he wrote it. But the verses of the elder bard are inferior to those of his great successor, and moreover the story they tell is far from delicate. The first four lines may be quoted without a blush:—

"Beneath a green shade, I fand a fair maid
Was sleeping sound and still, O;
A' lowing wi' love, my fancy did rove
Around her wi' good will, O."

The four concluding lines belong to an older lyric:—

"O the mill, mill, O, and the kiln, kiln, O!
And the coggin o' the wheel, O;
The sack and the sieve a' thae ye maun leave,
And round wi' a sodger reel, O."

"It is alleged by some," says Geddes, in his Saint's Recreation, written in 1670—and not without some colour of reason,—"that many of our good airs or tunes are made by good angels, but the lines of our songs by devils." The words of the "Godly Geddes," were true of many of the old popular songs of Caledonia, and "The mill, mill, O!" among the number. The third and fourth lines of the first verse of the song of Burns, were altered thus by Thomson:—

"And eyes again with pleasure beamed,
That had been bleared with mourning."

This change robbed the song of a natural and mournful image.

"The Poor and Honest Sodger" was sung in every vale, and on every hill; in every cot-house, village, and town: yet the man who wrote it was supposed by the mean and the spiteful to be no well-wisher to his coun-

try.—Ed.]

MEG O' THE MILL.

Air—*" Hey! bonnie lass, will you lie in a barrack?"*

I.

O KEN ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She has gotten a coof wi' a claute o' siller,
And broken the heart o' the barley Miller.

II.

The Miller was strappin, the Miller was ruddy;
A heart like a lord and a hue like a lady:
The Laird was a widdiefu', bleerit knurl;
She's left the guid-fellow and ta'en the churl.

III.

The Miller he hecht her a heart leal and loving;
The Laird did address her wi' matter mair moving,
A fine pacing horse wi' a clear chained bridle,
A whip by her side and a bonnie side-saddle.

IV.

O wae on the siller, it is sae prevailing;
And wae on the love that is fixed on a mailen!
A tocher's nae word in a true lover's parle,
But, gie me my love, and a fig for the warl!

[Burns touched up the old song of "Meg o' the Mill" for Johnson's Museum; it will be found among the Poet's notes on that work. One of the old verses is still remembered in the north—

"O wat ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
And wat ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
A braw new gown, and the tail o't is rotten,
And that's what Meg o' the Mill has gotten.

Another verse will show the bold humour in which our ancestors loved to indulge—

"And ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was married?
And ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was married?
The priest he was oxtered, the bridegroom was carried,
And how could Meg o' the Mill get married?"

The licence of a Scottish bridal—if we may believe the northern painters and poets—was very great: the revelry lasted three days and nights, according to Ramsay; and both David Allan and David Wilkie intimate that men and women's hearts overflowed with joy:—

"Some were fu' o' love divine,
And others fu' o brandy."

The riding for the "bruse"—the bedding—the stocking-throwing—the eating, the dancing, and the drinking, would require a volume.—Ed.]

No. XIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

THANK you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse, as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning-post!), and then, cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say, or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been," and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of Coila shall be "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words: now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of "The last time I came o'er the Moor," and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but, in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to make or mend. "For ever, Fortune, wilt thou prove," is a charming song; but "Logan

Burn and Logan Braes" are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and, if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of "Logan Water" (for I know a good many different ones), which I think pretty:—

"Now my dear lad maun face his foes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

"My Patie is a Lover gay" is unequal. "His Mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony!"

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, "Rigs of Barley," to the same tune, does not altogether please me; but if I can mend it and thresh a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. "The Lass o' Patie's Mill" is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it which my much-valued friend, Mr. Erskine, will take into his critical consideration. In Sir J. Sinclair's Statistical volumes are two claims; one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities, believe:—

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon castle with

the then Earl, father to Earl John; and one forenoon, riding or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irwine Water, still called "Patie's Mill," where a bonnie lass was "tedding hay, bare-headed, on the green." My Lord observed to Allan that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and, lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

"One Day I heard Mary say," is a fine song; but, for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Were there ever such banns published as a purpose of marriage between Adonis and Mary? I agree with you that my song, "There's nought but Care on every Hand," is much superior to "Poortith cauld." The original song, "The Mill, Mill, O," though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow, as an English set. "The banks of the Dee" is, you know, literally, "Langolee," to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it; for instance,

"And sweetly the nightingale sung from the *tree*."

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any

other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to "The small birds rejoice," &c. I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song. "John Anderson, my Jo," the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum is my composition, and I think it not my worst: if it suits you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are "Tullochgorum," "Lumps o' Puddin'," "Tibbie Fowler," and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called "Craigieburn Wood;" and, in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of the sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it; and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. "Shepherds, I have lost my love!" is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, but in its original state it is not quite a lady's song. I inclose an altered, not amended, copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his "Lone Vale" is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

[In this letter Burns calls himself the voice of Coila, in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the voice of Cona. He was an ardent admirer of the Celtic bard, and carried his poems frequently about with him. "Sae merry as we twa hae been," and "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'," are the names of two northern tunes. The song of "The small birds rejoice," or "The Chevalier's Lament," will be found in the last volume; and the lyric written to the tune of "Shepherds, I have lost my love," is there also under the name of "The gowden locks of Anna." Thomson, it appears, did not approve of the song, even in its amended state: it has, however, obtained the approbation of a divine of the kirk of Scotland, and laymen need no longer hesitate.—ED.]

No. XX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, April, 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse.—Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and "witch the world with your horsemanship."

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. "My Patie is a lover gay," though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza.

[Currie tells, that in the original letter Thomson hazarded many observations on Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, were suppressed. To these observations Burns alludes in his answer, and intimates that he thinks his friend is a little too ready to sacrifice simplicity for the sake of something striking. No one can hope to compose a song to a tune unless he can either hum it, or whistle it, or sing it: the music commands the proper words, and a true poet will obey it, as Burns always did, save in one or two instances, where he evidently had not mastered the air. He tells us, that he was in the habit of crooning the tune while in the act of composing it: nor will a song that echoes the music be obtained on easier terms.—ED.]

No. XXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I HAVE yours, my dear Sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes, wanting at the beginning what fiddlers call a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

> "There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> That wander thro' the blooming heather,'

you may alter to

> "Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
> Ye wander," &c.

My song, "Here awa, there awa," as amended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad; I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces: still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with "The last time I came o'er the moor." Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house—by Heaven, 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement; but, I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much; let him mend the song as the Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in "The Lass o' Patie's Mill" must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with "Corn Rigs are bonnie." Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, "Poortith cauld and restless love." At any rate, my other song, "Green grow the Rashes," will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name; which, of course, would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will

be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit "Bonnie Dundee." I send you also a ballad to the "Mill, Mill, O."

"The last time I came o'er the moor," I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me which I have picked up, mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air, called "Jackie Hume's Lament?" I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I'll enclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*.—Adieu!

No. XXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR:

I HAD scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and ere I slept drew the outlines of the foregoing. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert anything of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

No. XXIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 26th April, 1793.

I HEARTILY thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but at present suffice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the groundwork of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your interesting new ballad, "When wild War's deadly Blast," &c., to the "Mill, Mill, O," as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the

music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases, but that has nothing to do with the songs.

P. S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your "Rigs of Barley." If the loose sentiments are threshed out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

[It is quite plain, from this letter, that Thomson was at issue with his correspondent on the subject-matter of simplicity. Burns, like old Burton, was a plain man, calling "a spade a spade:" simplicity of expression was dear to his heart, and he considered it as essential in song. Thomson says, "I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural." He desired to vindicate the diplomatic language of the polished city; but Burns felt that elegance and simplicity were "sisters twin," and that words which failed to convey a clear meaning, or present a distinct image, were not for him.—ED.]

No. XXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

June, 1793.

WHEN I tell you, my dear Sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling: but the total ruin of a much-loved friend is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the "Mill, Mill, O."* What you think a defect, I esteem as a positive beauty: so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser, the hautboy-player in Edinburgh—he is here, instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this country. Among

* The lines were the third and fourth:—

"Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning."

r of his airs that please me, there is one, well
m as a reel, by the name of "The Quaker's
," and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine
to sing, by the name of "Liggeram Cosh, my
ie wee lass." Mr. Fraser plays it slow, and
an expression that quite charms me. I became
an enthusiast about it that I made a song for
hich I here subjoin, and enclose Fraser's set of
une. If they hit your fancy they are at your
ce; if not, return me the tune, and I will put
Johnson's Museum. I think the song is not
y worst manner.

BLYTHE HAE I BEEN.

Tune—"*Liggeram Cosh.*"

I.

Blythe hae I been on yon hill
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free
As the breeze flew o'er me.
Now nae langer sport and play,
Mirth or sang can please me;
Lesley is sae fair and coy,
Care and anguish seize me.

II.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring:
Trembling, I dow nocht but glow'r,
Sighing, dumb, despairing!
If she winna ease the thraws
In my bosom swelling;
Underneath the grass-green sod
Soon maun be my dwelling.

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.

[Though Miss Lesley Baillie, the heroine of this song, passed before the eyes of the Poet like a vision which never returns, her loveliness seems to have been long remembered. In expressing the hopelessness of misplaced love, Burns has surpassed all other poets: this song, and that of Jessy, would go far to sustain the assertion; but there are others of equal tenderness, which cannot but be present to the minds of all readers. Of the old song, from which he has borrowed nothing but the air, little is known: it was sometimes sung in Nithsdale, and, if I remember right, had a touch of the nursery about it.—Ed.]

No. XXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

June 25th, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ıdy to burst with indignation on reading of those ghty villains who divide kingdom against king- m, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out the wantonness of ambition, or often from still ıre ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind ·day I recollected the air of "Logan Water," and occurred to me that its querulous melody pro- bly had its origin from the plaintive indignation some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the ty- ınic strides of some public destroyer, and over- ıelmed with private distress, the consequence of :ountry's ruin. If I have done any thing at all :e justice to my feelings, the following song, com- sed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in y elbow-chair, ought to have some merit:—

LOGAN WATER.

I.

O Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride!
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the simmer sun.

But now thy flow'ry banks appear
Like drumlie winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his foes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes!

II.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers
Blythe morning lifts his rosy eye,
And evening's tears are tears of joy:
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

III.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile:
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

IV.

O wae upon you, men o' state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!

ow can your flinty hearts enjoy
he widow's tears, the orphan's cry ?*
ut soon may peace bring happy days
nd Willie hame to Logan braes !

---

ns in one of his letters says, "I remember the st lines of a verse in some of the old songs of water, which I think pretty :—

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

e lines belong to the "Logan braes" of my friend layne: the song was printed in the Star news- of May 23, 1789, and soon became a favourite, ell might :—

"By Logan streams that rin sae deep,
Fu' aft wi' glee I've herded sheep :
I've herded sheep, or gathered slaes,
Wi' my dear lad on Logan braes.
But waes my heart thae days are gane,
And fu' o' grief I herd my lane ;
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

"Nae mair at Logan kirk will he
Atween the preachings meet wi' me—
Meet wi' me, or when it's mirk,
Convoy me hame frae Logan kirk.
I weel may sing thae days are gane,
Frae kirk and fair, I come my lane ;
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

old verses to the same air, on which the modern are founded, will be given in the Poet's notes on ıh song—they are curious.—ED.]

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* Originally—

"Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries."

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?

Air—"*Hughie Graham.*"

"O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa';
And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

"Oh, there beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light."

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as every poet, who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

O were my love yon lilac fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
And I, a bird to shelter there,
When wearied on my little wing!

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renewed.

[There are fragments of song of a nature so exquisitely fine, that, like the purest marble, they cannot be eked out or repaired without showing where the hand of the restorer has been. Burns, though eminently skilful, has not succeeded in writing a verse worthy of the one preserved by Witherspoon: his lines are beautiful: but lilacs are not favourites with birds: the odour of their blossoms is unpleasing to the musicians of the air, and they seldom build in them or seek them out as a shelter. Tradition has many verses, some tender, others ludicrous, which I have heard sung as additions to the old fragment:—

"O were my love yon pickle leeks,
That's growing in the garden green;
And I were but the gardener lad—
I wad lie near the leeks at e'en.

"O were my love yon fragrant gean,
That hangs sae drap ripe on the tree;
And I were but yon little bird—
Far wi' that fragrant gean I'd flee."—ED.]

XXVI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Monday, 1st July, 1793.

I AM extremely sorry, my good Sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune, and when harmony will be restored, Heaven knows.

The first book of songs, just published, will be dispatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it, frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the "Quaker's Wife;" it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation, having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it, as soon as it is properly known. And, were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I shall be benefited by the publication,

you must suffer me to inclose a small mark of my gratitude,* and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for, by Heaven! if you do, our correspondence is at an end: and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.

Wednesday Morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to "Logan Water:" Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable, but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

[One of the gentlemen whom Thomson alludes to as partners in his speculation, was the Hon. Andrew Erskine: his health was declining, and desiring to free his mind from all the solicitude of either verse or music, he requested, as his partner says, to "be off." He did not long survive the separation.—ED.]

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* £5.

No. XXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July 2nd, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR:

I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and, as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' wood-note wild, is very fond of it; and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

BONNIE JEAN.

I.

There was a lass, and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen,
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest maid was bonnie Jean.

II.

And aye she wrought her mammie's wark,
And ay she sang sae merrilie;
The blithest bird upon the bush
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

III.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
And love will break the soundest rest.

IV.

Young Robie was the brawest lad,
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep, and kye,
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

V.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste,
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And, lang ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.

VI.

As in the bosom o' the stream,
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling, pure, was tender love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean.*

VII.

And now she works her mammie's wark,
And ay she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be,
Or what wad mak her weel again.

VIII.

But did na Jeanie's heart loup light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e,
As Robie tauld a tale o' love
Ae e'enin' on the lily lea?

* In the original MS. our Poet asks Mr. Thomson if this stanza is not 'ginal'

IX.

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove;
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love:

X.

O Jeanie fair, I lo'e thee dear;
O canst thou think to fancy me!
Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot,
And learn to tent the farms wi' me?

XI.

At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge,
Or naething else to trouble thee;
But stray amang the heather-bells,
And tent the waving corn wi' me.

XII.

Now what could artless Jeanie do?
She had nae will to say him na:
At length she blush'd a sweet consent,
And love was ay between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M., daughter to Mr. M., of D., one of your subscribers. I have

not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

[Some of the finest of the songs of Burns were composed in honour of the charms of ladies of my native vale. Jean, the eldest daughter of John M'Murdo, Esq. of Drumlanrig, was the heroine of this exquisite song. The original, presented by the Poet to the family, lies before me: there are many variations, but they are of language rather than of sentiment. It wants the verse which Burns reckoned original:—

"As in the bosom of the stream
The moonbeam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling pure was tender love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean."

The two first lines of the eleventh verse stand thus in the manuscript, and perhaps it would be as well to restore them:—

"Thy handsome foot thou shalt na set
In barn or byre to trouble thee."

The homage paid to the graceful forms of the ladies of the M'Murdo family, merits notice, were it but to justify the Poet from a charge brought against him in Ayrshire, that his beauties were not other men's beauties. The o'erword of an old song seems to have been in his fancy when composing this lyric:—

"Learn to turn the maut wi' me,"

—it occurs oftener than once in the manuscript.—ED.]

No. XXVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear, by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! BURNS'S character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind, will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants, which the cold unfeeling ore can supply: at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold in any musical work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written: only your partiality to me has made you say too much: however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs in the list you sent me. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

"The Flowers o' the Forest," is charming as a poem; and should be, and must be, set to the notes, but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas beginning,

"I hae seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,"

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburghshire. What a charming apostrophe is

"O fickle fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!"

The old ballad, "I wish I were where Helen lies," is silly, to contemptibility. My alteration of it, in Johnson's, is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls, ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough, forgeries) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations, —but no matter.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF TASTE—all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit

to foretel and affirm, that your great grand-child will hold up your volumes, and say, with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor!"

[Much has been said, and not a little written, concerning the refusal of Burns to receive a recompence in money for his labours: he had a right to do as he pleased, but certainly the labourer was worthy of his hire. Had he lived, he might have taken a lesson from Thomson in such matters.—"The publisher," says that gentleman in his preface, "has an exclusive right to all the songs written purposely for his collections, as well as to all the symphonies and accompaniments. And as he did not obtain these without expending a large sum of money, without laborious researches and unwearied exertions, and not until after a correspondence of twenty years with poets, musicians, and antiquaries, both at home and abroad, he feels it due to himself distinctly to announce, that if any person shall publish any of these songs, or any of the symphonies or accompaniments, he may depend upon being prosecuted for damages, in terms of the Act of Parliament." Nay, even from Burns himself, he obtained a document which might have opened the Poet's eyes to the value of his own productions. —"I do hereby certify that all the songs of my writing, published and to be published by Mr. George Thomson of Edinburgh, are so published by my authority. And, moreover, that I never empowered any other person to publish any of the songs written by me for his work.

And I authorize him to prosecute any person or persons who shall publish or vend any of those songs without his consent. (Signed) Robert Burns."

The old ballad of "I wish I were where Helen lies," for which the Poet expresses such contempt, is considered both beautiful and affecting. Currie seems to suppose that Burns was unacquainted with the genuine old strain, but the song which he altered for the Museum contains proof to the contrary: it is the ancient strain itself; anything but improved by his alterations. Tradition readily supplies many versions—all are beautiful:—

"Curs'd be the heart that thought the thought,
And curs'd the hand that fired the shot,
Oh, in my arms burd Helen drop't,
And died for sake o' me.

"O think na but my heart was sair
When my love fell and spak nae mair;
I laid her down wi' mickle care
On fair Kirkconnell lea.

"I laid her down, my sword did draw,
Stern was our strife in Kirtle-shaw—
I cutted him in pieces sma'
For her that died for me."

Fair Helen of Kirkconnell belongs to the romantic songs of Scotland; other poets have taken up the story of the lovers, but the strains of the elder bard still triumph.—Ed.]

No. XXIX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st Aug., 1793.

DEAR SIR:

I HAD the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

"The bonnie brucket Lassie" certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," "Let me in this ae Night," and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse's leisure: these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you'll notice, that in airs of this sort, the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of "The bush aboon Traquair," "Lord Gregory," and the like; for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound without the sense. Indeed, both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed: they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, "There was a Lass, and she was fair," is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

XXX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR THOMSON:

I HOLD the pen for our friend Clarke, who, at present, is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The "Georgium Sidus," he thinks, is rather out of tune; so, until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted he says you shall have them.

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

[The writer of this odd note was Stephen Clarke, teacher and composer of music; who superintended the publication of the Musical Museum, and through Burns was introduced to several good families in Dumfries-shire. He had a high opinion of his own merit, and a humble opinion of the merit of most of his brethren. He spoke contemptuously of the musical powers of the laird of Friars-Carse; though "The blue-eyed lass," as well as some other airs, might have saved him from the sarcasms of a brother composer.—ED.]

No. XXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August,

Your objection, my dear Sir, to the pas
my song of "Logan Water," is right in
stance; but it is difficult to mend it; if I ca
The other passage you object to does not a
the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on "Robin Adai
you will probably think, with little success
is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way n
that I despair of doing any thing better to it

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

Tune—"*Robin Adair.*"

I.

While larks with little wing
Fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
Forth I did fare:
Gay the sun's golden eye
Peep'd o'er the mountains high;
Such thy morn! did I cry,
Phillis the fair.

II.

In each bird's careless song,
Glad, I did share;
While yon wild flowers among,
Chance led me there:
Sweet to the opening day,
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;
Such thy bloom! did I say,
Phillis the fair.

III.

Down in a shady walk
Doves cooing were,
I mark'd the cruel hawk
Caught in a snare:
So kind may fortune be,
Such make his destiny!
He who would injure thee,
Phillis the fair.

o much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find elf most at home.

have just put the last hand to the song I meant "Cauld kail in Aberdeen." If it suits you to rt it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a rite of mine: if not, I shall also be pleased; use I wish, and will be glad, to see you act dedly on the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of e, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

[One of our poets inspires his writing-desk w
power of speech,—makes it complain of being
to endure all the fulsome compliments which he
beauty,—the flattering dedications which he m
wealth,—and humorously beg a remission from
painful, because affected or unjust. Beauty is,
manner, obliged to endure much at the hands of th
ward sons of song. It is, perhaps, not unfair for a
sing of his own sufferings : but a young lady has c
complain, when a bard volunteers to embody in v
imaginary woes of some fantastic person, and acc
of inflicting visionary wounds on the fiddler to
music she moves upon the floor, or on the musici
conducts her voice through a labyrinth of crotch
quavers. Phillis M'Murdo is the heroine of thi
Burns wrote it at the request of Stephen Clarke,
sician, who believed himself in love with his "
pupil."—ED.]

No. XXXII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

August, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR:

I CONSIDER it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes: tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my staircase conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*; which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics: though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give "Robin Adair" a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with.—I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable

verses of "Down the Burn, Davie," so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your "John Anderson, my Jo," which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson, in great good humour, is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to shew that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were "first acquent." The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.

[The "Mrs. Anderson" on whom this praise is bestowed is what the old ballad calls

"A carlin—a rig-widdie carlin,"

and seems fitter for a wife to him of Linkumdoddie than to be spouse to cantie and douce John. She has the look of an ogress: her nose resembles a ramhorn, and the fingers which she is about to apply to her husband's lyart-locks are as hard as lobster-claws.—ED.]

No. XXXIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT crinkum-crankum tune, "Robin Adair," has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured, in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice, as follows :—

HAD I A CAVE.

Tune—"*Robin Adair.*"

I.

Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar;
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my lost repose,
Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne'er to wake more.

II.

Falsest of womankind, canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air!
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there!

By the way, I have met with a musical E
lander, in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are c
tered here, who assures me that he well remen
his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both "E
Adair" and "Gramachree." They certainly
more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inver
so it could not be any intercourse with Irelanc
could bring them;—except, what I shrewdly
pect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, ha
and pipers, used to go frequently errant thr
the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, a
some favourite airs might be common to both
case in point—They have lately, in Ireland,
lished an Irish air, as they say, called "Cai
delish." The fact is, in a publication of Cor
great while ago, you will find the same air, cal
Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it.
name there, I think, is "Oran Gaoil," and
air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. (
Parson, about these matters.

No. XXXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR:

"LET me in this ae night" I will re-consider. I am glad that you are pleased with my song, "Had I a cave," &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening, with a volume of the Museum in my hand; when, turning up "Allan Water," "What numbers shall the muse repeat," &c. as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air; and, recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, 'till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay's "Tea Table," where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is "Allan Water;" or, "My love Annie's very bonnie." This last has certainly been a line of the original song; so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which, I presume, it formerly occupied; though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy:—

BY ALLAN STREAM.

I.

By Allan stream I chanced to rove
While Phœbus sank beyond Benledi;
The winds were whispering through the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready:
I listened to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony;
And aye the wild wood echoes rang—
O dearly do I lo'e thee, Annie!

II.

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said "I'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow,—we ne'er should sever.

III.

The haunt o' spring's the primrose brae,
The simmer joys the flocks to follow;
How cheery, thro' her shortening day,
Is Autumn, in her weeds o' yellow!
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting her, our bosom's treasure?

vo! say I: it is a good song. Should you so too (not else) you can set the music to it, t the other follow as English verses.

umn is my propitious season. I make more in it than all the year else.

God bless you!

---

e fancy of Burns took a flight northwards in con- ; this song. Benledi is a mountain westward of allan, some three thousand feet high, and Allan gives its name to the strath. The Poet might ound all that he wanted in his immediate neigh- od: Criffel or Queensberry rise loftily enough, nan Water is sufficiently pure for all the pur- f song: moreover, the old lyric from which he e idea belongs to the district:—

"O Annan Water's wide and deep,
And my love Annie's wondrous bonnie;
Shall I be laith to weet my feet
For her whom I love best of onie?
Gar saddle me my bonnie black,
Gar saddle soon and make him ready,
For I will down the Gatehope-slack
And a' to see my bonnie lady."

her ancient strain has a similarity of thought guage—the lover seems to be a cautious person:

"O Annan Water's wading deep,
Yet I am loth to weet my feet;
But if ye'll consent to marry me
I'll hire a horse to carry thee."

Annan is a beautiful river with alternate pool ream, and liable, like all mountain waters, to floods. Burns was often on its banks; amongst ds he sought for smugglers, or wooed the muses, mstances required.—ED.]

No. XXXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Is "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad," o of your airs? I admire it much; and yesterday set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I h met with here, begged them of me, as he admi the air much; but, as I understand that he lo with rather an evil eye on your work, I did choose to comply. However, if the song does suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. T set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johns Museum.

O WHISTLE, AND I'LL COME TO YOU.

I.

O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,
O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad:
Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.
But warily tent, when you come to court me,
And come na unless the back-yett be a-jee;
Syne up the back-stile and let naebody see,
And come as ye were na comin' to me,
And come as ye were na comin' to me.

II.

.t Kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,
lang by me as tho' that ye car'd na a flie ;
ut steal me a blink o' your bonnie black e'e,
et look as ye were na lookin' at me.
et look as ye were na lookin' at me.

III.

.y vow and protest that ye care na for me,
nd whyles ye may lightly my beauty a wee ;
ut court na anither, tho' jokin' ye be,
or fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.
or fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.
) whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad,
) whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad :
ho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
) whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.

Another favourite air of mine, is, " The muckin ' Geordie's byre." When sung slow with expres- ion, I have wished that it had had better poetry : hat, I have endeavoured to supply, as follows :—

ADOWN WINDING NITH.

I.

Adown winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers as they spring ;
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to sing.

Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,
They never wi' her can compare:
Whaever has met wi' my Phillis
Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

II.

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
So artless, so simple, so wild;
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis,
For she is simplicity's child.

III.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,
Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest:
How fair and how pure is the lily,
But fairer and purer her breast.

IV.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,
They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie:
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
Its dew-drop o' diamond, her eye.

V.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes thro' the green-spreading gro
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.

VI.

But beauty how frail and how fleeting,
The bloom of a fine summer's day!
While worth in the mind o' my Phillis
Will flourish without a decay.
Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,
They never wi' her can compare:
Whaever has met wi' my Phillis
Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner your book, as she is a particular flame of his. ıe is a Miss P. M., sister to "Bonnie Jean." hey are both pupils of his. You shall hear from e, the very first grist I get from my rhyming-mill.

[The first of these songs, "Whistle, and I'll come to ɜe, my lad," is founded on some old lines to the same ', which the Poet has wrought into the first verse. .e early strain was once popular in Nithsdale: it had ɾeral variations, nor is that of Burns without them:—

"O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo,
O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo:
Though father and mother and a' should say no,
O whistle, and I'll come to thee, my jo."

From one of the variations it appears that the name the heroine was Jeanie:—

"Though father and mother and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeanie will venture wi' thee, my lad."

Who the lady was, no one has told us: Jeanies ɔunded in the district: some of them were eminently

beautiful; yet none, save one, was likely to countenance a lover who made his appearance under the cloud of night and courted concealment.

The other song, "Adown winding Nith I did wander," is not indebted to old verses for either its sentiments or its character. The young lady who inspired it was Phillis M'Murdo, afterwards Mrs. Norman Lockhart of Carnwath. "This song," says Currie, "though certainly beautiful, would appear to more advantage without the chorus, as is indeed the case with several other songs of our author." The chorus seems no encumbrance in this instance: it maintains the leading sentiment, and, in singing, enables the other voices to take a share, and give additional emphasis to the praise bestowed on this Nithsdale beauty. The former editors of Burns seem to have disliked choruses greatly: they are sometimes omitted, though the song cannot be sung without them. It is true that the chorus seldom carries on the story: but then that is not its object: it enables the company to take a share in the entertainment, and no one need be told with what effect two or three well-tuned voices take up the o'erword at the end of each verse.—ED.]

No. XXXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT tune, "Cauld Kail," is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin-shot at the muses;* when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet simple inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step," and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits: secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's Museum.

[Gloamin—twilight. A beautiful poetic word which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin-shot, a twilight interview.—CURRIE.]

COME, LET ME TAKE THEE.

Air—"*Cauld Kail.*"

I.

Come, let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder;
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The warld's wealth and grandeur:
And do I hear my Jeanie own
That equal transports move her?
I ask for dearest life alone,
That I may live to love her.

II.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure:
And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never.

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. "The last time I came o'er the moor" I cannot meddle with as to mending it; and the musical world have been

so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

[The voice of tradition may often be listened to, yet not in all things trusted: the legends of the Vale of Nith say that the heroine of "Come let me take thee to my heart," was Jean Lorimer; but this wants confirmation. Burns was so much under the influence of beauty that he is never supposed to sing without some living fair one in his mind; and, as the "Lass of Craigieburn" was far from coy, popular belief has seated her beside the Poet, and inspired him with her blue eyes and rosy lips. Be this as it may, it is quite evident that nothing is borrowed from the old words of the air to which the song is adapted. "Cauld kail in Aberdeen, and castocks in Strabogie," have no connexion with the ecstasy of such lines as these:—

"Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure."—ED.]

No. XXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

August, 17

DAINTY DAVIE.

I.

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers
And now comes in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie.
Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Dainty Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

II.

The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round us blaw,
A wandering wi' my Davie.

III.

When purple morning starts the hare,
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie.

IV.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,
I flee to his arms I lo'e best,
And that's my ain dear Davie.
Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Bonnie Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune.—See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N. B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is cursed nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

[The reader will find an earlier song to this air in Vol. IV., page 121. The Poet has added a very happy chorus, and made some alterations, they are curious— as showing the care with which he sometimes revised compositions from which he hoped for fame.—" Dainty Davie " is the name of an old merry song, from which Burns has borrowed nothing save the title and the measure. It relates the adventure of David Williamson, a preacher of the days of the Covenant: he was pursued by Dalzell's dragoons, and seeking refuge in the house of Cherrytrees, the devout lady put the man of God

into a bed beside her daughter to hide him from the men of Belial: the return which the reverend gentleman made for this is set forth very graphically in the old verses. The young lady sings—

> "Being pursued by a dragoon,
> Within my bed he was laid down,
> And weel I wat he was worth his room—
> My douce, my dainty Davie."

The lady of Cherrytrees is not the only example of strong faith in the fair sex. Sir Robert Strange, the eminent engraver, fled in his youth from a field of battle, where he had fought in vain for his native princes, and being hotly pursued, sought refuge in a gentleman's house, where a lady—beautiful and young—concealed him under her hooped-petticoat. When days of peace came and fortune smiled, the grateful rebel wooed his protectress and made her his wife: she was equally witty and lovely, and figured among the fashionables of London till the death of her husband.

The Nithsdale lady went to no such extremities in her affection—her name has not transpired—the name of one who had courage to keep a tryste on the "Warlock knowe," is worthy of remembrance.—ED.]

No. XXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1st Sept. 1793.

MY DEAR SIR:

SINCE writing you last I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad," will render it nearly as great a favourite as "Duncan Gray." "Come, let me take thee to my breast,"—"Adown winding Nith," and "By Allan stream," &c., are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended.—"Had I a cave on some wild distant shore" is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken: these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think right to inclose a list of all the favours I have ask of her—no fewer than twenty and three! have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many it is probable he will attend to: most of the r maining airs would puzzle the English poet not little; they are of that peculiar measure and ryhth that they must be familiar to him who writes them.

[Thomson at first spoke of twenty or five and twe songs: at the time when he wrote this letter he had ceived seven and twenty, yet he requests three and twe more because the muse was propitious and the Poet e thusiastic! It will be seen that the list was not limited this number. When Burns refused money, it was for songs which he had undertaken to supply: there is word of any recompence for the new batch of lyrics. ED.]

No. XXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear Sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you; the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication, so get a verse from him now and then: though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air "Hey, tuttie taitie," may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannock-burn. This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of

Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might pose to be the gallant Royal Scot's address t heroic followers on that eventful morning.

BRUCE TO HIS MEN AT BANNOCKBU

Tune—"*Hey, tuttie taitie.*"

I.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie!

II.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour:
See approach proud Edward's pow'r—
Chains and slaverie!

III.

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

IV.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fa'?
Let him follow me!

V.

By oppression's woes and pains!
By our sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

VI.

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do or die!

o may God ever defend the cause of truth and
rty, as he did that day!—Amen.
. S. I showed the air to Urbani, who was highly
sed with it, and begged me to make soft verses
t, but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble
he subject, till the accidental recollection of that
ious struggle for freedom, associated with the
ring ideas of some other struggles of the same
ire, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming
ia. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you
find in the Museum; though I am afraid that
air is not what will entitle it to a place in your
ant selection.

---

t is related by Syme of Ryedale, that Burns composed
noble song under the influence of a storm of rain
ightning among the wilds of Glenken in Galloway.
n "the rain and the whirlwind came abroad," the

Poet regarded them not: he neither drew his hat
his brow, nor urged his pony onward, but seemed los
thought. The fruit of this silence was the "Scots
hae wi' Wallace bled;" an extraordinary song produ
in an extraordinary manner. His own account of
composition has nothing of the romantic in it: yet
the poetic description of Syme cannot be considere
interesting as the following letter containing Burns'
opinion of this favourite war song.—"I am indebt
says my friend, Robert Chambers, "to Mr. Stewa
Dalguise, for this very interesting document addre
to an officer of a fencible regiment, and dated D
fries, 5th December, 1793: it is, perhaps, one of
most characteristic letters Burns ever wrote:—

"Sir,—Heated as I was with wine yesternight, I
perhaps, rather seemingly impertinent in my ans
wish to be honoured with your acquaintance. You
forgive it—it was the impulse of heartfelt respect.
is the father of the Scotch County Reform, and is a
who does honour to the business, at the same time
the business does honour to him,' said my worthy fi
Glenriddell to somebody by me who was talking of
coming to this country with your corps. Then I re
I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand
say to him—'Sir, I honour you as a man to whon
interests of humanity are dear, and as a patric
whom the rights of your country are sacred.'

"In times like these, Sir, when our commoner
barely able by the glimmer of their own twilight-u
standings to scrawl a frank, and when lords are
gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom sh
sinking country call for help? To the indepe
country gentleman! To him who has too deep a

country not to be in earnest for her welfare: and in the honest pride of man can view with equal mpt the insolence of office and the allurements of ption.

mentioned to you a Scots ode, or song, I had composed, and which, I think, has some merit. r me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the re, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Ac- of it, Sir, as a very humble, but most sincere tribute pect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, olds dearer an independent mind. I have the ur to be, &c. ROBERT BURNS."

mething of the spirit of this far-famed song is visi- memoranda, made by Burns on visiting the field of in August, 1787.—"Dine at Auchenbowie: Mr. ro an excellent worthy old man: Miss Monro an ble, sensible, sweet young woman. Come on to ockburn. Shewn the old house where James III. ed so tragically his unfortunate life. The field of ockburn: the hole in the stone where glorious e set his standard. Here no Scot can pass unin- ted. I fancy to myself that I see my gallant heroic trymen coming o'er the hill and down upon the lerers of their country and the murderers of their rs: noble revenge and just hate glowing in every striding more and more eagerly as they approach ppressive, insulting blood-thirsty foe! I see them in gloriously-triumphant congratulation on the vic- us field, exulting in their heroic leader, and rescued ty and independence!" After the prose of this pas- the poetry of the ode might be expected.—ED.]

No. XL.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

I DARE say, my dear Sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my hobby-horse, which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarlick, the bedlam jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of man.

The following song I have composed for "Orangaoil," the Highland air that, you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well!—If not, 'tis also well!

BEHOLD THE HOUR.

Tune—"*Oran-gaoil.*"

I.

Behold the hour, the boat arrive;
Thou goest, thou darling of my heart!
Severed from thee can I survive?
But fate has will'd, and we must part.

I'll often greet this surging swell,
Yon distant isle will often hail:
"E'en here I took the last farewell;
There, latest mark'd her vanish'd sail."

II.

Along the solitary shore
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar,
I'll westward turn my wistful eye:
Happy, thou Indian grove, I'll say,
Where now my Nancy's path may be!
While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
O tell me, does she muse on me?

[The inspirer of this song is said to have been Clarinda: she meditated, it seems, a voyage to a certain eastern isle, and the Poet has imagined the last farewell token, and the parting looks interchanged. Some of his most impassioned lyrics were composed in honour of this accomplished lady.—ED.]

No. XLI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 5th Sept. 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is, to me, the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it, intreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as "Hey, tuttie taitie." Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it; for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs—I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs of which I lately sent you the list, and I think "Lewie Gordon" is most happily adapted to your ode; at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in "Lewie Gordon" more of the grand

the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with
gree of spirit which your words would oblige
inger to give it. I would have no scruple
t substituting your ode in the room of "Lewie
on," which has neither the interest, the grandeur,
he poetry that characterize your verses. Now
ariation I have to suggest upon the last line of
verse—the only line too short for the air—is
llows :—

rse 1st, Or to "glorious" victorie.
2nd, "Chains"—chains and slaverie.
3rd, Let him, "let him" turn and flee.
4th, Let him "bravely" follow me.
5th, But "they shall," they shall be free.
6th, Let us, "let us" do or die!

you connect each line with its own verse, I do
hink you will find that either the sentiment or
expression loses any of its energy. The only
which I dislike in the whole of the song is,
elcome to your gory bed." Would not another
be preferable to "welcome?" In your next
l expect to be informed whether you agree to
I have proposed. The little alterations I sub-
vith the greatest deference.

ıe beauty of the verses you have made for
an-gaoil" will ensure celebrity to the air.

---

he simple energy of this noble war-ode is weakened
ly by lengthening the fourth line of each verse to

suit the air of "Lewie Gordon." These ch
now generally rejected both by reader and sin
appearance of the Scottish army on that even
well described by a native Master in the art of

"Responsive from the Scottish host,
Pipe clang and bugle sound were toss'd,
His breast and brow each soldier cross'd,
And started from the ground:
Arm'd and array'd for instant fight,
Rose archer, spearman, squire and knight
And in the pomp of battle bright,
The dread battalia frown'd."

A far inferior hand supplies us with the ap
Edward's army nigh the close of the strife :—

"Weep all ye English maidens—
Lo Bannock-brook's in flood,
Not with its own sweet waters,
But England's noblest blood:
For see your arrow-show'r has ceas'd,
The thrilling bow-string's mute;
And where rides fiery Glocester?
All trodden under foot.
Wail all ye dames of England—
No more shall Musgrave know
The sound of the shrill trumpet—
And Argentine is low."—ED.]

No. XLII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it.*

"Down the burn, Davie." I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:—

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was ay the tale.

With "Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew?"
Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the burn,
And ay shall follow you."

"Thro' the wood, laddie"—I am decidedly of opinion, that both in this, and "There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes hame," the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

* Mr. Thomson's list of songs for his publication. In his remarks, the Bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance are presented to the reader.—CURRIE.

"Cowden-knowes." Remember in your index, that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning,

"When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

"Laddie, lie near me," must lie by me for some time. I do not know the air; and, until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza—when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature round me, that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging, at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

"Gil Morice" I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length; the air itself is never sung, and its place can be well supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance,

"Craigieburn wood," and "Roy's Wife." The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the hand-writing of the lady who composed it: and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.

"Highland laddie." The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and, what Oswald calls, the old "Highland laddie," which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called "Jinglan Johnnie;" it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, "I hae been at Crookieden," &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and, in the mean time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is no doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

"Auld Sir Simon," I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place, "The Quaker's Wife."

"Blythe hae I been o'er the hill," is one of the finest songs I ever made in my life; and, besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly

include "The bonniest lass in a' the warld" in your collection.

"Dainty Davie," I have heard sung, nineteen thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit, as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

"Fee him, Father"—I inclose you Fraser's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas in that style; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Fraser gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which "Patie Allan's Mither died, that was, about the back o' midnight;" and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.

Tune—"*Fee him, Father.*"

I.

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie!
Thou hast left me ever;
Thou hast left me ever, Jamie!
Thou hast left me ever.

Aften hast thou vow'd that death
Only should us sever;
Now thou's left thy lass for ay—
I maun see thee never, Jamie,
I'll see thee never!

II.

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie!
Thou hast me forsaken;
Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie!
Thou hast me forsaken.
Thou canst love anither jo,
While my heart is breaking:
Soon my weary een I'll close,
Never mair to waken, Jamie,
Ne'er mair to waken!

The Poet left these exquisite verses unfinished: it his intention to have added another stanza, but he er forgot or failed to find the muse in a suitable mood. ugh a fragment, the song, when sung with proper ng, never fails to make a deep impression. "The ch," says Currie, "employ the abbreviation 'I'll' 'I shall,' as well as 'I will,' and it is for 'I shall' it is in this song. In Annandale, as in the northern ties of England, for 'I shall' they use 'I'se.'" A shep- maiden of that district met her lover at a Lockerby and reproached him in these words, "How can ye ae ramgunshoch to mey, when I'se sae kircudjech to ?" Those who are conversant in the origin of lan- ge perceive the rudeness of the hind and the kindness e maiden in these strange words.—En.]

"Jocky and Jenny" I would discard, and place would put "There's nae luck abou house," which has a very pleasant air; and is positively the finest love-ballad in that st the Scottish, or perhaps in any other lang "When she came ben she bobbet," as an a more beautiful than either, and in the andant would unite with a charming sentimental balla

"Saw ye my Father?" is one of my gr favourites. The evening before last I war out, and began a tender song, in what I th its native style. I must premise that the old and the way to give most effect, is to have no ing note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at into the pathos. Every country girl sings— ye my Father?" &c.

My song is but just begun; and I shoul before I proceed, to know your opinion of have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, may be easily turned into correct English.*

"Todlin hame." Urbani mentioned an i his, which has long been mine—that this highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, yo soon hear him at your concert try it to a s mine in the Museum—"Ye banks and br bonnie Doon." One song more and I have d "Auld lang syne." The air is but mediocre the following song, the old song of the olden

* This song begins,
"Where are the joys I hae met in the morning."

ıd which has never been in print, nor even in anuscript, until I took it down from an old man's nging, is enough to recommend any air :—

AULD LANG SYNE.

I.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min' ?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne ?
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne !

II.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu't the gowans fine ;
But we've wandered mony a weary foot,
Sin auld lang syne.

III.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,
Frae mornin' sun till dine :
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
Sin auld lang syne.

IV.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine ;
And we'll tak a right guid willie-waught,
For auld lang syne !

V.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!

Now, I suppose, I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. "Gil Morice," "Tranent Muir," "Macpherson's farewell," "Battle of Sheriff Muir," or, "We ran and they ran" (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history), "Hardiknute," "Barbara Allan" (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared); and besides do you know that I really have the old tune to which "The Cherry and the Slae" was sung; and which is mentioned as a well known air in "Scotland's Complaint," a book published before poor Mary's days. It was then called, "The banks o' Helicon;" an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scottish music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

["Auld Lang Syne" is one of these lyrics which owes its conception to the olden muse, and all the beauty of

ts language and sentiment to the modern. Burns introduced it to Thomson as an effort of an old minstrel, and he wrote thus to Mrs. Dunlop:—"Light be the turf on the breast of the heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment!" In this sentiment millions will concur. To inquire how much of the song is old is to go into the regions of conjecture; for my own part, I have no hesitation in assigning the second, third, and fourth verses to Burns. As he professed to have taken it down from the lips of an old man—one of those old men whom true poets alone can meet with—we need not seek for the original in our collections. The "Auld Lang Syne" of Ramsay's Miscellany helps us to a line or so:—

> "Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
> Though they return wi' scars;
> These are the noble hero's lot,
> Obtained in glorious wars."

That Ramsay rejected such a song as the modern "Auld Lang Syne," no one but a resolute antiquarian would assert. I am inclined to think that Allan left few old songs out of his collection, save those that were so wild as to daunt even the people of an age who loved intrepid simplicity of language."—ED.]

No. XLIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 179[3]

I AM happy, my dear Sir, that my ode plea[s]es you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed," though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if please, we will let the line stand as it is. I h[a]ve altered the song as follows:—

BANNOCKBURN.

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

I.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie!

II.

Now's the day, and now's the hour—
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Edward! chains and slaverie!

III.

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor! coward! turn and flee?

IV.

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Caledonian! on wi' me!

V.

By oppression's woes and pains!
By our sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be—shall be free!

VI.

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do, or die!

N.B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace:—

"A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow."

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort—I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen!

[The field on which this memorable battle was fought is annually visited by English tourists, and they seldom

leave it without carrying away something to remind them of the spot. Some even invaded the sanctity of the "Bore-stone," in which the standard of Bruce was placed, and carried bits with them as specimens. Those who reflect rightly on the upshot of the contest, feel that in the triumph of freeborn men the great cause of liberty triumphed: no historian, save one with a contracted heart—nor no enlightened statesman, can regard the struggles of Scotland with other feelings than those of sympathy. Few Scotsmen can pass the porphyry tomb of Edward the First in Westminster Abbey, without a certain mounting of the blood; or look upon the "old black stone of Scone" without recollecting how it came there. These are not narrow-souled nationalities.

The memorable "Scotch stone" is any thing but black; it is a rough-piled reddish-gray sandstone, such as may be found on the Solway-side at Arbigland: it is six and twenty inches long, sixteen inches wide, and eleven inches thick, and is fixed in the bottom of the chair with cramps of iron. The stone is unquestionably Scottish: troughs, crosses, and other ancient matters, at present to be found in the north, seem from the same quarry.—ED.]

No. XLIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

12th Sept. 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison with my own, respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make; and to reconsider the whole with attention.

"Dainty Davie" must be sung, two stanzas together, and then the chorus; 'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of "Fee him, Father," when performed with feeling: but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with

" Fee him, Father," and with " Todlin' hame" also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs. Some Bacchanals I would wish to discard. " Fye, let's a' to the bridal," for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers: and " Saw ye my Father" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. " Gory" presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them, " Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shewn the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

" Now prepare for honour's bed,
Or for glorious victorie."

[Some of the opinions expressed in this letter are entitled to respect: others are so singular as to require notice. Neither " Fye, let us a' to the bridal," nor " Saw ye my Father," merit the hard words which Thomson applies to them: for the time in which they were written, they are neither vulgar nor indelicate. Both songs till a late period continued to be sung in the best com-

in Scotland, nor has the noble descendant of a —noble both by genius and birth—hesitated to the merit of writing "Fye, let us a' to the bridal," e of his ancestors. Something like the taste of son came a few years back over a small coterie of in the north: they laid the songs of Scotland be- iem, and placing their fingers on all such parts as reckoned indelicate, held a consultation upon the ng, and after many shakings of the head and erings in the ear, they smoothed down without se whatever seemed to rise higher than their fan- evel of purity. The concluding paragraph of son's communication requires no comment: that s wrong the world has likely by this time con- l him. Who can read his altered lines after

> "Welcome to your gory bed,
> Or to victorie—"

ut feeling that such emendations crush the original out of the verse, and give nothing in return, save se of sound.—ED.]

No. XLV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

"WHO shall decide when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to yo for putting me on re-considering it; as I think have much improved it. Instead of "soger! hero! I will have it "Caledonian! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it, over and over; and to th world, some way or other, it shall go as it is. A the same time it will not in the least hurt m should you leave it out altogether, and adhere your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.

I have finished my song to "Saw ye my Father and in English, as you will see. That there is syllable too much for the expression of the air, it true; but, allow me to say, that the mere dividin of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, not a great matter: however, in that, I have n pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of t poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is business where I hint my ideas with the utmo diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, a are popular: my advice is to set the air to the o words, and let mine follow as English verses. He they are—

FAIR JENNY.

Tune—"*Saw ye my Father?*"

I.

Where are the joys I have met in the morning,
That danc'd to the lark's early song?
Where is the peace that awaited my wand'ring,
At evening the wild woods among?

II.

No more a-winding the course of yon river,
And marking sweet flow'rets so fair:
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,
But sorrow and sad sighing care.

III.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,
And grim, surly winter is near?
No, no, the bees' humming round the gay roses,
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

IV.

Fain would I hide, what I fear to discover,
Yet long, long too well have I known,
All that has caused this wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

V.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,
Nor hope dare a comfort bestow:
Come then, enamour'd and fond of my anguish,
Enjoyment I'll seek in my woe.

Adieu, my dear Sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

[Mr. Thomson very properly adopted the song of "Bannockburn," as the bard presented it to him. He attached it to the air of "Lewie Gordon," and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better; but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and may employ the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any such should in future arise. The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances, with great readiness; perhaps indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In the present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who in preparing for an engagement attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success; and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men the conquerors at Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their

spirits were without doubt wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm, suited to the occasion; a pitch of enthusiasm, at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment, this heroic "welcome" may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of mortal exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported, by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrtæus to the war-song of General Wolfe. Mr. Thomson's observation, that "Welcome to your gory bed, is a discouraging address," seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted, that the term gory is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful, but a disagreeable image to the mind. But a great poet, uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination. And it is the privilege of superior genius, by producing a new association, to elevate expressions that were originally low, and thus to triumph over the deficiencies of language. In how many instances might this be exemplified from the works of our immortal Shakspeare :—

> "Who would fardels bear,
> To groan and sweat under a weary life;—
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin?"

It were easy to enlarge, but to suggest such reflections is probably sufficient.—CURRIE.]

No. XLVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of song to find verses whose measures would suit the airs which you have allotted me to find English songs

For "Muirland Willie" you have, in Ramsay's Tea-table, an excellent song, beginning, "Ah w those tears in Nelly's eyes?" As for "The Collie dochter," take the following old Bacchanal:—

DELUDED SWAIN, THE PLEASURE.

I.

Deluded swain, the pleasure
The fickle fair can give thee,
Is but a fairy treasure—
Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.

II.

The billows on the ocean,
The breezes idly roaming,
The clouds' uncertain motion—
They are but types of woman.

III.

O! art thou not ashamed
To doat upon a feature?
If man thou wouldst be named,
Despise the silly creature.

IV.

Go, find an honest fellow;
Good claret set before thee:
Hold on till thou art mellow,
And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in "Logan-Water," I mend thus:—

"How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?"

The song, otherwise, will pass. As to "M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth," you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours in the Museum. Vol. ii. p. 81. The song begins:—

"Raving winds around her blowing."*

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the "Banks of Banna," for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you

* This will be found in the latter part of this volume.—ED.

would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of "Roy's wife," for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. "Deil tak the wars," is a charming song; so is "Saw ye my Peggy?" "There's nae luck about the house" well deserves a place. I cannot say that "O'er the hills and far awa," strikes me as equal to your selection. "This is no my ain house," is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of "I hae laid a herrin' in sawt?" I like it much. Your jacobite airs are pretty: and there are many others of the same kind, pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert, "Fye, let's a' to the bridal" to any other words than its own.

What pleases me as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, "Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs," "Fye, let's a' to the bridal," with several others of that cast, are, to me, highly pleasing; while, "Saw ye my Father, or saw ye my Mother?" delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?" pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but, "Ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

[Burns in the song to the air of "The Collier's Daughter," seems to have had in mind the famous old northern chaunt:—

"Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs,
And fye, gie me my coggie;
I wadna gie my three-girred cog,
For a' the queans in Bogie."

The songs which the Poet enumerates in this letter, and the opinions which he expresses on their merits, are such as might be looked for from one who felt humour and tenderness, pathos and simplicity, with all the force of true genius. The refinement which would exclude from society such songs as "Fye, gie me my coggie, Sirs," "Fye, let us a' to the bridal," "The Auld Gudeman," "Meg o' the mill," and others of a similar stamp, is of a very questionable kind. Catherine of Russia was the purest in speech of all the sovereigns of her day: a slip of the tongue, or a suspicious allusion, were rewarded with Siberia or the knout. The purest in speech was the grossest in act—

"For, in such matters, Russia's mighty Empress
Behaved no better than a common sempstress."—ED.]

No. XLVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

October,

Your last letter, my dear Thomson, wa laden with heavy news. Alas! poor E The recollection that he was a coadjutor publication, has, till now, scared me from to you, or turning my thoughts on compo you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to t the "Quaker's Wife;" though, by the by Highland gentleman and a deep antiquar me, it is a Gaelic air, and known by the "Leiger m' choss." The following verses, will please you, as an English song to the a

NANCY.

I.

Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Thine my lovely Nancy;
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
Ev'ry roving fancy.

---

* The honourable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly, w choly death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent he has suppressed.—Currie.

II.

To thy bosom lay my heart,
There to throb and languish:
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
That would heal its anguish.

III.

Take away those rosy lips,
Rich with balmy treasure:
Turn away thine eyes of love,
Lest I die with pleasure.

IV.

What is life when wanting love?
Night without a morning:
Love's the cloudless summer sun,
Nature gay adorning.

We owe this song, it is said, to the charms of Linda. The words bear no resemblance to the old ins which accompany the air of "The Quaker's ," to which it is adapted:—

"Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,
Merrily danced the Quaker;
Merrily danced the Quaker's wife,
Wi' a' her bairns about her."

lover of old English poetry will perceive a resemce between the third verse of the song of Burns, and truly exquisite one attributed to Shakspeare:—

"Take, oh! take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
But my kisses bring again,
Seals of love, but sealed in vain."

While those who read the Bible will not fail to r
the passage from which both bards drew their i
"Take away thine eyes from me, for they hav
come me."

Burns, in communicating this song to Thom
commended several lyrics written by Gavin T
"Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine," he s
may be prejudiced in his favour; but I like som
pieces very much:—

'THE NIGHTINGALE.

'BY G. TURNBULL.

'Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain;
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

'For, tho' the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

'All day, with fashion's gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o'er the plain;
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

'When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.'

"I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's
would go charmingly to 'Lewie Gordon:'—

'LAURA.

'By G. Turnbull.

'Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

'If at rosy dawn I choose
To indulge the smiling muse;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat;
If beneath the moon's pale ray,
Thro' unfrequented wilds I stray;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

'When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod,
And to fancy's wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise;
While with boundless joy I rove
Thro' the fairy land of love:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.'

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other
rtunity."

iese songs have been preserved because Burns seems
ıve liked them: it is not quite safe to reject as indif-
ıt the strains which he sanctioned.—Ed.]

No. XLVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

7th November, 1

My good Sir:

After so long a silence it gave me p pleasure to recognize your well-known hand had begun to be apprehensive that all was n with you. I am happy to find, however, th silence did not proceed from that cause, a you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English s "Leiger m' choss," which I think extremel although the colouring is warm. Your frie Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable and as you have the command of his manusc hope you may find out some that will ans English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

[During almost the whole period that Burns Dumfries, he was suffering from the twofold m misrepresentation and poverty. His farming s tions had drained his pockets of money, and t and the malevolent were labouring to deprive bread. Well might he say as he did, that he ha heart to sing. Can the lark warble under the the raven?—Ed.]

No. XLIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

December, 1793.

Tell me how you like the following verses to ıe tune of "Jo Janet:"—

I.

Husband, husband, cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, sir;
Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, sir.
"One of two must still obey,
Nancy, Nancy;
Is it man, or woman, say,
My spouse, Nancy?"

II.

If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience;
I'll desert my sov'reign lord,
And so, good b'ye, allegiance!
"Sad will I be, so bereft,
Nancy, Nancy;
Yet I'll try to make a shift,
My spouse, Nancy."

III.

My poor heart then break it must,
My last hour I'm near it:
When you lay me in the dust,
Think, think, how you will bear it.
"I will hope and trust in heaven,
Nancy, Nancy;
Strength to bear it will be given,
My spouse, Nancy."

IV.

Well, sir, from the silent dead,
Still I'll try to daunt you;
Ever round your midnight bed
Horrid sprites shall haunt you.
"I'll wed another, like my dear
Nancy, Nancy;
Then all hell will fly for fear,
My spouse, Nancy."

[In composing this song the Poet had in his
lyrics of the olden time: the more immediat
of his imitation was "My Jo Janet," in the c
of Allan Ramsay, beginning—

"Sweet Sir, for your courtesie,
When ye come to the Bass, then
For the love ye bear to me,
Buy me a keeking-glass, then."
"Keek into the draw well,
Janet, Janet,
And there ye'll see your bonnie sel,'
My Jo Janet."

Burns regretted that he had not sooner turned his
upon lyrics of a conversational character.—ED.]

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE?

Air—"*The Sutor's Dochter.*"

I.

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

II.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou, for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

---

his song is said to have been composed in honour
e charms of Janet Miller, of Dalswinton, mother to
present Earl of Mar, and at that time one of the
iest women in all the south of Scotland. The Poet
ght so well of it, that he gave a copy to Johnson as
as to Thomson.—ED.]

BUT LATELY SEEN.

Tune—"*The winter of life.*"

I.

But lately seen in gladsome green,
The woods rejoiced the day;
Thro' gentle showers the laughing flowers,
In double pride were gay:
But now our joys are fled
On winter blasts awa!
Yet maiden May, in rich array,
Again shall bring them a'.

II.

But my white pow, nae kindly thowe
Shall melt the snaws of age;
My trunk of eild, but buss or beild,
Sinks in Time's wintry rage.
Oh! age has weary days,
And nights o' sleepless pain!
Thou golden time o' youthfu' prime,
Why comes thou not again?

[Though Burns gave much of his musing-time to t
work of Thomson, he did not neglect his earlier frie

inson, but contributed new as well as amended lyrics
m time to time, and took a lively interest in the suc-
s of the work. "The Winter of Life," is one of those
amunications.—"Perhaps," says the Poet to the pub-
ier, "you may not find your account lucratively in
s business; but you are a patriot for the music of
ir country; and I am certain posterity will look on
mselves as highly indebted to your public spirit.
ve you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-
se-chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few
ier qualities, such as whether she be rather black, or
; plump or thin; short, or tall: and choose your air,
I shall task my muse to celebrate her." It is not
own what reply Johnson made to the latter part of
s epistle: he was a plain, blunt man, and cared little
ut the graces of song, or the melody of music, save in
way of his trade.—ED.]

TO MARY.

Tune—"*Could aught of song.*"

I.

Could aught of song declare my pains,
Could artful numbers move thee,
The muse should tell, in labour'd strains,
O Mary, how I love thee!
They who but feign a wounded heart
May teach the lyre to languish;
But what avails the pride of art,
When wastes the soul with anguish?

II.

Then let the sudden bursting sigh
The heart-felt pang discover;
And in the keen, yet tender eye,
O read th' imploring lover.
For well I know thy gentle mind
Disdains art's gay disguising;
Beyond what fancy e'er refin'd,
The voice of nature prizing.

[These tender verses seem to have been inspired a much by Hamilton's song of "Ah! the Shepherd's mourn ful Fate," as by the charms of Mary. It is in one of th latter volumes of Johnson's Musical Museum.—Ed.]

ERE'S TO THY HEALTH, MY BONNIE LASS.

Tune—"*Laggan Burn.*"

I.

HERE'S to thy health, my bonnie lass,
Gude night, and joy be wi' thee;
I'll come nae mair to thy bower-door,
To tell thee that I lo'e thee.
O dinna think, my pretty pink,
But I can live without thee:
I vow and swear I dinna care
How lang ye look about ye.

II.

Thou'rt ay sae free informing me
Thou hast nae mind to marry;
I'll be as free informing thee
Nae time hae I to tarry.
I ken thy friends try ilka means,
Frae wedlock to delay thee;
Depending on some higher chance—
But fortune may betray thee.

III.

I ken they scorn my low estate,
But that does never grieve me;
But I'm as free as any he,
Sma' siller will relieve me.

I count my health my greatest wealth,
Sae long as I'll enjoy it:
I'll fear nae scant, I'll bode nae want,
As lang's I get employment.

IV.

But far off fowls hae feathers fair,
And ay until ye try them:
Tho' they seem fair, still have a care,
They may prove waur than I am.
But at twal at night, when the moon shines bri
My dear, I'll come and see thee;
For the man that lo'es his mistress weel
Nae travel makes him weary.

[This was a song of the Poet's youthful days trimmed it up a little for the Museum, and adapted the beautiful tune called "Laggan Burn." The w resemble, here and there, the song beginning

"My father was a farmer
Upon the Carrick border."

There is more of the man in his early verses, and i sentiment in his latter ones.—ED.]

THE FAREWELL.

Tune—"*It was a' for our rightfu' king.*

I.

It was a' for our rightfu' king,
We left fair Scotland's strand;
It was a' for our rightfu' king
We e'er saw Irish land,
My dear;
We e'er saw Irish land.

II.

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain;
My love and native land farewell,
For I maun cross the main,
My dear;
For I maun cross the main.

III.

He turned him right, and round about
Upon the Irish shore;
And gae his bridle-reins a shake,
With adieu for evermore,
My dear;
With adieu for evermore.

IV.

The sodger from the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again,
My dear;
Never to meet again.

V.

When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep;
I think on him that's far awa',
The lee-lang night, and weep,
My dear;
The lee-lang night, and weep.

[Hogg, in his notes to the Jacobite Reliques, says this song was written by Captain Ogilvie, who was killed on the banks of the Rhine, in the year 1695. Sir Walter Scott, in the last edition of his works, refers to his beautiful song "A weary lot is thine," in the third canto of Rokeby, and says "The last verse is taken from the fragment of an old Scottish ballad, of which I only recollected two verses when the first edition of Rokeby was published. Mr. Thomas Sheridan kindly pointed out to me an entire copy of this beautiful song, which seems to express the fortunes of some follower of the Stuart family." The song, as copied by Scott, is nearly word for word with that of Burns in the fifth volume of Johnson's Musical Museum: it is, nevertheless, probable that the Poet rather beautified or amended some ancient strain which he had discovered, than wrote it wholly from his own heart and fancy.—ED.]

O STEER HER UP.

Tune—"*O steer her up, and haud her gaun.*"

I.

O steer her up and haud her gaun—
Her mother's at the mill, jo;
And gin she winna take a man,
E'en let her take her will, jo:
First shore her wi' a kindly kiss,
And ca' another gill, jo,
And gin she take the thing amiss,
E'en let her flyte her fill, jo.

II.

O steer her up, and be na blate,
An' gin she take it ill, jo,
Then lea'e the lassie till her fate,
And time nae longer spill, jo:
Ne'er break your heart for ae rebute,
But think upon it still, jo;
Then gin the lassie winna do't,
Ye'll fin' anither will, jo.

[Allan Ramsay found a wild old song of this and measure, and adopting the first four lines, pe drinking ditty, which may be found in the Tea Miscellany. The second verse will be sample cient :—

"See that shining glass of claret,
How invitingly it looks;
Take it aff, and let's hae mair o't—
Pox on fighting, trade, and books:
Let's have pleasure while we're able,
Bring us in the mickle bowl;
Place't on the middle o' the table,
And let wind and weather yowl."

Burns took the first four lines of the old strai eked them out in his own way: he, however, gla the ancient verses, and may be said to have re both their indelicacy and their wit.—ED.]

O AY MY WIFE SHE DANG ME.

Tune—"*My wife she dang me.*"

I.

O ay my wife she dang me,
And aft my wife did bang me,
If ye gie a woman a' her will,
Gude faith, she'll soon o'er-gang ye.
On peace and rest my mind was bent,
And fool I was I married;
But never honest man's intent,
As cursedly miscarried.

II.

Some sairie comfort still at last,
When a' their days are done, man;
My pains o' hell on earth are past,
I'm sure o' bliss aboon, man.
O ay my wife she dang me,
And aft my wife did bang me,
If ye gie a woman a' her will,
Gude faith, she'll soon o'er-gang ye.

Verses of an old song of the same name, and desing on the same subject of this little humorous ;, are still remembered in Scotland. But it is only n the wine has flowed freely and the tongue has n out a licence that stanzas so wittily wild are re-ed.—ED.]

OH, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST

Tune—"*Lass o' Livistone.*"

I.

Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee:
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

II.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there:
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

ns composed this song, tradition asserts, in honour beauteous Mrs. Riddel: neither the song of Ram- the same air, beginning with

"Pained with her slighting Jamie's love,
Bell dropt a tear, Bell dropt a tear,"

: more ancient strain of the "Lass o' Livistone," d aid to the Poet in this beautiful song. There)wever, some fine snatches in the latter, but they ike lilies amongst nettles:—

"The bonnie lass o' Livistone,
Her name ye ken, her name ye ken,
And ay the welcomer ye'll be,
The farther ben, the farther ben.
And she has written in her contract
To lie her lane, to lie her lane—
To let the lassie keep her word
Wad be a shame, wad be a shame.

"The bonnie lass o' Livistone
Is fair to see, is fair to see;
With what a light look and a loup
She came to me, she came to me.
She has a black and a rolling ee,
An' a dimplit chin, an' a dimplit chin;
And no to taste her rosie lips
Wad be a sin, wad be a sin."

er versions of these old verses exist, but their deco- inferior to their wit.—ED.]

No. L.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th April, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR:

OWING to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity till lately of perusing it.* How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while he is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—"Go," says the doctor, "and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour." "Alas! Sir," replied the patient, "I am that unhappy Carlini!"

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserable weak drinker!

* A letter to Mr. Cunningham.

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of talents. He has just begun a sketch from your otter's Saturday Night," and if it pleases him- f in the design, he will probably etch or engrave

In subjects of the pastoral and humorous id, he is perhaps unrivalled by any artist living. fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his ales, and his colouring is sombre; otherwise, his ntings and drawings would be in greater re- est.

I like the music of the "Sutor's dochter," and l consider whether it shall be added to the last ume; your verses to it are pretty; but your hu- rous English song to suit "Jo Janet," is ini- table. What think you of the air, "Within a le of Edinburgh?" It has always struck me as a dern English imitation, but it is said to be Os- ld's, and is so much liked that I believe I must lude it. The verses are little better than namby- mby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or o?

The painter who pleased Burns and Thomson so much h his shepherds and shepherdesses, was David Allan: studied in Rome and in London, but acquired little le from his classic efforts compared to what he ieved by his delineations of the pastoral scenes and ppy peasantry of his native country. With loveliness

he could do little: but give him an old cottage, wit older plenishing and still older inhabitants, and h could do all but work miracles. An ancient chair with dog sleeping—or seeming to sleep—under it: an old wo man twirling her distaff in the sun, with her cat and he chickens around her: or an old man sitting ruminatin at his own fireside, with his bible on his knees, inspire him at once; and in subjects such as these he has neve been surpassed. His illustrations of Ramsay's Gentl Shepherd will bear out these commendations: his Glau and Symon, his Mause and Madge, are inimitable: no so his Patie and his Peggie: his forte lay in representin humorous characters, and he failed when youth an loveliness came before him to be limned. His mantle- with a double portion of his power—has fallen on Davi Wilkie.—ED.]

No. LI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR:

I RETURN you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and, though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the Gentle Shepherd; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls "The banks of Cree." Cree is a beautiful romantic stream: and, as her Ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it:—

HERE IS THE GLEN.

Tune—"*Banks of Cree.*"

I.

Here is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade;
The village-bell has told the hour—
O what can stay my lovely maid?

II.

'Tis not Maria's whispering call;
'Tis but the balmy-breathing gale,
Mixed with some warbler's dying fall,
The dewy star of eve to hail.

III.

It is Maria's voice I hear!
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little, faithful mate to cheer,
At once 'tis music—and 'tis love.

IV.

And art thou come? and art thou true?
O welcome, dear to love and me!
And let us all our vows renew
Along the flow'ry banks of Cree.

[The Poet had a double task to perform for the family of Kerroughtree: he wrote lyrics in honour of the lady, and lampoons for the benefit of the laird. The first was a task according to his heart, and he performed it the readier that Lady Elizabeth Heron was fair and accomplished: of his success in the latter, the Heron Ballads have already informed the reader. In a note to the last of these lampoons, misled by an old rumour and manuscript memoranda, we made a statement which, we are glad to learn, is wholly unfounded. Mr. Heron certainly lost his election, and died on his way back to Scotland: but his nature was too noble, and his mind too pious, to allow political disappointment to prevail against his reason: his health had been for some time giving way: he was taken ill at Grantham, and died in peace, —as all good men would desire to die.—ED.]

No. LII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

July, 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of democratic discords? Alas the day! And woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions—* * * * * * *

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham of Fintray. I wrote, on the blank side of the title-page, the following address to the young lady:—

Here, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers joined,
Accept the gift; tho' humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind.

* A portion of this letter has been left out, for reasons that will be easily imagined.

So may no ruffian feeling in thy breast
  Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among;
But peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,
  Or love ecstatic wake his seraph song:

Or pity's notes, in luxury of tears,
  As modest want the tale of woe reveals;
While conscious virtue all the strain endears,
  And heaven-born piety her sanction seals.

["It were to be wished," says Currie, "that instead of 'ruffian feeling' in the second verse, that the Bard had used a less rugged epithet—*e. g.* ruder." Burns seldom failed to clothe his thoughts in suitable language: the sentiment put on at once its livery of words, and he was loth to make alterations. The remark of Currie strikes, not at this expression alone, but at the general language of the Poet's verse. We must take him as we find him; had he softened down his masculine energy, he would have robbed his poems of a great charm: the rose would be less lovely were its thorns removed, and how would the thistle look without its prickles? The cry of the eagle can never be tamed down into the song of the lark, nor the wild note of the blackbird sobered into that of the wren.—ED.]

No. LIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 10th August, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR:

I OWE you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but, nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry, and as the season approaches in which your muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

[Burns in the preceding letter, and Thomson in this, allude to the commencement of that terrible war which shook the thrones of Europe, and strewed hill and vale with slaughtered bodies. Democratic ferocity on one side, and kingly tyranny on the other, turned the Continent into a battle-field: the notes of Pleyel were unheard amid the trumpet-sound and the din of artillery: and some of the songs of Burns, expressing a manly—a true Scottish-love for freedom—were for a time unacceptable to the people of Britain.—ED.]

No. LIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

30th August, 1794.

THE last evening, as I was straying out, and thinking of "O'er the hills and far away," I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it, at first; but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs; but, as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—"Sweet Annie frae the Sea-beach came." Now for the song:—

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

Tune—"*O'er the hills,*" *&c.*

I.

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad?
How can I the thought forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe?
Let me wander, let me rove,
Still my heart is with my love:
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are with him that's far away.
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are ay with him that's far away.

II.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in this scorching sun
My sailor's thund'ring at his gun:
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate do with me what you may—
Spare but him that's far away!

III.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar,
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that's far away.

IV.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end,
Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may heaven with prosp'rous gales
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey—
My dear lad that's far away.
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly dreams, and thoughts by day,
Are ay with him that's far away.

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in he spirit of Christian meekness.

No. LV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 16th Sept., 1794.

MY DEAR SIR:

You have anticipated my opinion of "On the seas and far away;" I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly "Bullets, spare my only joy." Confound the bullets! It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, "At the starless midnight hour," that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

[The objections raised by Thomson to this song seem to have been unacceptable to Currie. The verses proposed to be omitted are the most original and touching: the third, in particular, is a noble one, and in keeping with the excited feelings of a lady whose love is on the great deep, exposed to the accidents of battle and the extremities of the tempest.—ED.]

No. LVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

I SHALL withdraw my "On the seas and far away" altogether: it is unequal, and unworthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all; and as such, pray look over them and forgive them, and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," as it was owing to me that ever it saw the light. About seven years ago, I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie, who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll, which I took today, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

CA' THE YOWES.

I.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather growes,
Ca' them whare the burnie rowes—
  My bonnie dearie!
Hark the mavis' evening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang!
Then a faulding let us gang,
  My bonnie dearie.

II.

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
Thro' the hazels spreading wide
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
  To the moon sae clearly.

III.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers,
  Fairies dance sae cheery.

IV.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
Thou'rt to love and heaven sae dear,
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
  My bonnie dearie.

V.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou hast stown my very heart;
I can die—but canna part—
My bonnie dearie!
Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather growes,
Ca' them whare the burnie rowes—
My bonnie dearie!

shall give you my opinion of your other newly
)ted songs, my first scribbling fit.

---

he water, on the banks of which the scene of this
is laid, is a beautiful stream, and known by three
es, Cairn, Dalgoner, and Clouden. Under the first
e, it finds its way over wild uplands, among flocks of
p and coveys of black grouse: under the second, it
ies the walls of old castles, rural villages, and seems
ne place to be lost among thick groves of hazel and
y; and, under the third name it finds its way among
antic rocks, where it forms a succession of deep clear
s, connected by leaps or falls, the individual mur-
ings of which are any thing but unmusical; and,
lly, it unites itself with the Nith in the shadow of the
ers of Linclouden. Burns formed this song upon an
r lyric, an amended version of which is inserted in
fourth volume of this work.—Ed.]

No. LVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song, called "Onagh's Water-fall?" The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of her's shall have merit: still I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum; and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LO'ES ME BEST OF A'.

Tune—"*Onagh's Water-fall.*"

I.

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
Bewitchingly o'er-arching
Twa laughin' een o' bonnie blue.
Her smiling sae wyling,
Wad make a wretch forget his woe;
What pleasure, what treasure,
Unto these rosy lips to grow:
Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,
When first her bonnie face I saw;
And ay my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

II.

Like harmony her motion;
Her pretty ankle is a spy
Betraying fair proportion,
Wad mak a saint forget the sky.
Sae warming, sae charming,
Her faultless form and gracefu' air;
Ilk feature—auld nature
Declar'd that she could do nae mair:
Her's are the willing chains o' love,
By conquering beauty's sovereign law;
And ay my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

III.

Let others love the city,
And gaudy shew at sunny noon;
Gie me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon
Fair beaming, and streaming,
Her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang:
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love,
And say thou lo'est me best of a'.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always, without any hypocrisy, confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for "Rothemurche's Rant," an air which puts me in raptures; and, in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I

never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. "Rothemurche," he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and, on his recommendation, I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth, or last part, for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.*

I have begun anew, "Let me in this ae night." Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *dénouement* to be successful or otherwise? Should she "let him in" or not?

Did you not once propose "The Sow's tail to Geordie" as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

* In the original follow here two stanzas of a song, beginning "Lassie wi' the lintwhite locks," which will be found at full length afterwards.—CURRIE.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day, on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following:—

TO DR. MAXWELL,

ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny;
You save fair Jessie from the grave?—
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

[The lady with the flaxen tresses was Jean Lorimer, or Mrs. Whelpdale, as she loved to be called: her husband had, at this period, deserted her, and she was oftener to be found in Dumfries than at Kemmis-hall, the residence of her father. Of her beauty something has been already said: in conclusion, it may be added, that she was rather above than below the middle size, and proportioned like one of the truest productions of

ıcient statuary. Her hair, which she wore flowing abundant, fell almost in armfuls over her round and white shoulders: it was inclining to be waving r than curling, and was darker than what the epi- flaxen seems to intimate. She danced and sung much grace and sweetness: her eyes were large ustrous, and laughed more than did her lips when vas well pleased. This minuteness will be forgiven ıose who reflect that to her charms we owe some of nest lyrics in the language.

Dr. Maxwell, a word or two was said in the life of 'oet. He is a skilful physician, and an accomplished eman. He mingled in the stormy doings of the days of the French revolution, and escaped with ulty, it is alleged, from the far-reaching and fierce hes of the Jacobin Club. Tired of revolutions and ics, he retired to his native place, and, by his man- and conversation, sustained the fame of the noble e of Maxwell, of which he is a descendant.—ED.]

No. LVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose "wood notes wild" are become as enchanting as ever. "She says she lo'es me best of a'," is one of the pleasantest table songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the "Sow's tail," particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your "Ca' the ewes" is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask

you whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the "Duenna" possess much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefiy vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs, of course, would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury-lane, or Shield for Covent-garden; both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on: so it may be with the namby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself, by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

No. LIX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 14th October, 1794.

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added, are inclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are, in general, elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published, by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs according to the æras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq., he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it, uncandidly and unjustly, leaving it to be inferred that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a packing to make room for Peter's. Of you he speaks with some respect, but

gives you a passing hit or two for daring to dress up a little some old foolish songs for the Museum. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities : many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognize the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed: and, as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so, even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear (which is far from certain), still it must evidently be a chance whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved: and, without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

[Of such a person, so skilful and so plodding—so dry and so doubting—so captious and sarcastic as Joseph Ritson, the Poet of Ayr had not heard, till his name was announced by Thomson. He was one of the most laborious of our latter antiquaries: his birth in a northern English county made him familiar with the Scottish dialect and with old ballad lore; his education as a lawyer sharpened his faculties and disciplined him for habits of research, while his love of all that was old, and strange, and uncouth in literature amounted to a passion which, in the end, overpowered his reason. He had little or no poetic feeling; he was a jacobite, too, and a bitter one; but, by a transition not uncommon, became a jacobin, and, as Citizen Ritson, is yet remembered by those who had no sympathy for his researches in song. To the task of editorship he brought an acuteness which all publishers of other men's verses soon learned to dread; and along with this came a suspicion that as Chatterton, Pinkerton, and others had imposed new verse as old on the world, there was nothing real and genuine to be had. He boldly charged Percy with the forgery of many of the "Reliques of Old English Poetry," an accusation which has since been triumphantly refuted; and he attacked the learned and laborious Warton with an acrimony new in English criticism. "All his doings to rehearse" would take many pages; his dissertation upon Scottish song is searching and accurate, nor is his selection of lyrics much amiss, though he has committed several mistakes in matters of taste.—ED.]

No. LX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

19th October, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

BY this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two; so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, persuade you to adopt my favourite, "Craigie-burn Wood," in your selection: it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact *(entre nous)*, is in a manner to me, what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaiver about it among our acquaintances). I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life,

and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your book?—no! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs; do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself on a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of "When she cam ben she bobbit," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly, when set to another air, may, perhaps, do instead of worse stanzas:—

SAW YE MY PHELY.

(QUASI DICAT PHILLIS.)

Tune—"*When she cam ben she bobbit.*"

I.

O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,
She winna come hame to her Willy.

II.

What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
She lets thee to wit that she has thee forgot,
And for ever disowns thee, her Willy.

III.

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
As light as the air, and fause as thou's fair,
Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. "The osie" (in the Museum) is my composition; the r was taken down from Mrs. Burns's voice. It is ell known in the West Country, but the old words e trash. By the by, take a look at the tune gain, and tell me if you do not think it is the ori-inal from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. he second part, in particular, for the first two or ree bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's ament" is mine: the music is by our right trusty nd deservedly well-beloved, Allan Masterton. Donocht-Head" is not mine: I would give ten ounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh erald; and came to the editor of that paper with he Newcastle post-mark on it. "Whistle o'er the ve o't" is mine: the music said to be by a John ruce, a celebrated violin player in Dumfries, about

the beginning of this century. This I know, Bruc who was an honest man, though a red-wud Hig landman, constantly claimed it; and, by all the o musical people here, is believed to be the auth of it.

"Andrew and his cutty gun." The song which this is set in the Museum is mine, and w composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintro commonly and deservedly called the Flower Strathmore.

"How long and dreary is the night." I m with some such words in a collection of songs som where, which I altered and enlarged; and, to plea you, and to suit your favourite air, I have taken stride or two across my room, and have arranged anew, as you will find on the other page:—

Tune—"*Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.*"

I.

How lang and dreary is the night,
When I am frae my dearie;
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Though I were ne'er sae weary.
For oh! her lanely nights are lang;
And oh, her dreams are eerie;
And oh, her widow'd heart is sair,
That's absent frae her dearie.

II.

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie;
And now what seas between us roar—
How can I be but eerie?

III.

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours;
The joyless day how dreary!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.
For oh! her lanely nights are lang;
And oh, her dreams are eerie;
And oh, her widow'd heart is sair,
That's absent frae her dearie.

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your
ea of the expression of the tune. There is, to
e, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot,
my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda
rs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer,
ays and sings at the same time so charmingly,
at I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent
to the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um
litson) has done in his London collection.
These English songs gravel me to death. I have
t that command of the language that I have of
y native tongue. I have been at "Duncan Gray,"

to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:

Tune—"*Duncan Gray.*"

I.

Let not woman e'er complain
Of inconstancy in love;
Let not woman e'er complain
Fickle man is apt to rove:
Look abroad through nature's range,
Nature's mighty law is change;
Ladies, would it not be strange
Man should then a monster prove?

II.

Mark the winds, and mark the skies;
Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow:
Sun and moon but set to rise,
Round and round the seasons go:
Why then ask of silly man
To oppose great nature's plan?
We'll be constant while we can—
You can be no more, you know.

Since the above, I have been out in the count taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with lady whom I mentioned in the second page of t

s-and-ends of a letter. As usual, I got into g; and, returning home, I composed the follow-:—

HE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

Tune—"*Deil tak the Wars.*"

I.

leep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature?
Rosy morn now lifts his eye,
lumbering ilka bud which nature
Waters wi' the tears o' joy:
Now through the leafy woods,
And by the reeking floods,
/ild nature's tenants freely, gladly stray;
The lintwhite in his bower
Chants o'er the breathing flower;
The lav'rock to the sky
Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,
/hile the sun and thou arise to bless the day.

II.

hœbus gilding the brow o' morning,
Banishes ilk darksome shade,
ature gladdening and adorning;
Such to me my lovely maid.
When absent frae my fair,
The murky shades o' care

With startless gloom o'ercast my sullen sky;
But when, in beauty's light,
She meets my ravish'd sight,
When thro' my very heart
Her beaming glories dart—
'Tis then I wake to life, to light, and joy.

If you honour my verses by setting the air them, I will vamp up the old song, and make English enough to be understood.

I enclose you a musical curiosity, an East Ind air, which you would swear was a Scottish o I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman w brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mi Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, i I intend putting it into the Musical Museum.

I would be obliged to you if you would proc me a sight of Ritson's collection of English son which you mention in your letter. I will thank y for another information, and that as speedily as y please—whether this miserable drawling hotch-po epistle has not completely tired you of my corr pondence?

[The despairing swain in "Saw ye my Phely" is sai have been Stephen Clarke, musician. The lady whom persuaded the Poet to accuse of coldness and inconsta was Phillis M'Murdo. His fantastic woes only exci a smile on her part: nor could they be welcome t

y where he had been introduced as a teacher. Mu-
ıs have sometimes fiddled and lira-lira-la'd them-
s into the affections of high-born dames. The air
ıich these verses were composed took its name from
ıg of considerable merit beginning thus :—

"O when she came ben she bobbit fu' law,
And when she came ben she bobbit fu' law,
When she came ben, she kissed Cockpen,
And then denied that she did it at a'.

"O never look down my lassie ava,
O never look down my lassie ava,
Thy coatie and sark are thy ain hands wark,
And Lady Jane's sel was never sae braw."

ıe earlier version of "How long and dreary is the
:," will be found at page 96 of volume IV. : the
ure is different as well as many of the lines, and it
·ected to be sung to a Gaelic air. Both songs are
le and affecting. "Donocht-Head," which the Poet
es so highly, was written by a gentleman, now
, of the name of Pickering, who lived at Newcastle.
e are some who still believe it to be by Burns him-
I know not on what grounds, except that it is
!ly natural and original :—

"Keen blaws the wind o'er Donocht-Head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaber-lunzie tirls my sneck,
And shivering tells his waefu' tale.
Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his winding-sheet
Be naething but a wreath o sna

"Full ninety winters hae I seen,
And pip'd where gor-cocks whirring flew,
And mony a day y've danc'd I ween
To lilts which from my drone I blew.
My Eppie waked, and soon she cry'd,
Get up, guidman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din.

"Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;
Your bluid is thin, ye've tint the gate,
Ye should na stray sae far frae hame.—
Nae hame have I, the minstrel said,
Sad party-strife o'erturned my ha';
And weeping at the eve of life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw."

The Poet has himself, in part, intimated the origi the song to Chloris.—"He sat sae late and drank stout," at his friend's house, that the morning sun ros him on his way home, and suggested these verses to excited fancy. The complicated measure has commu cated a laboured-like air to the stanzas: they are full, h ever, of truth and nature: they were favourites with Poet—from the trouble which they cost him, perhap his manuscript affords sundry variations :—

"Now to the streaming fountain,
Or up the heathy mountain,
The hart, hind, and roe freely, wildly-wanton stray;
In twining hazel bowers
His lay the linnet pours:
The lav'rock, &c.

"When frae my Chloris parted,
Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted,
Then night's gloomy shade, cloudy, dark, o'ercast my sky:
But when she charms my sight,
In pride of beauty's light;
When thro' my very heart
Her beaming glories dart,
'Tis then, 'tis then I wake to life and joy."—ED.]

No. LXI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, October 27, 1794.

t sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet more exist without his mistress than his meat. I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes itching smiles have so often enraptured the sh bard, that I might drink her sweet health the toast is going round. "Craigie-burn " must certainly be adopted into my family, she is the object of the song; but, in the of decency, I must beg a new chorus verse you. "O to be lying beyond thee, dearie," haps, a consummation to be wished, but will) for singing in the company of ladies. The in your last will do you lasting credit, and ıe respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly ır opinion with respect to the additional airs : ea of sending them into the world naked as were born was ungenerous. They must all thed and made decent by our friend Clarke. nd I am anticipated by the friendly Cunning- in sending you Ritson's Scottish Collection. it me, therefore, to present you with his Eng- ollection, which you will receive by the coach. not find his historical essay on Scottish song sting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous re- s will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan

has just sketched a charming design from "Maggie Lauder." She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P.S. Pray what do your anecdotes say concerning "Maggie Lauder?" Was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely "spier for her, if you ca'd at Anstruther town."

[Of Maggie Lauder much has been written by annotators, but no light has been thrown upon either her birth-place or her station: she is likely a creation of the minstrel muse, and belongs to the imagination. The mind of the world is essentially prosaic; it loves truth, and rejoices to find that sometimes the characters which fiction presents are derived from originals of flesh and blood. The greater proportion are, nevertheless, ideal; and it is the greatest test, as well as triumph of genius, to pass them as real. How many rustic farmers have contended for the honour of sitting for Dandie Dinmont! several are still pointed out as the prototypes of Tam O'Shanter; and, on walking down the Minories, one cannot help looking from side to side for the sign of Isaac Rapine, the money-broker. These are the victories achieved by genius. Maggie Lauder has lately obtained a longer lease of life at the hands of a northern poet. She is the heroine in Tennant's Anster Fair, a poem of great originality as well as force—the forerunner of what has been called the Beppo school of verse.—ED.]

No. LXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

MANY thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your present: it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work. In my last I told you my objections to the song you had selected for "My lodging is on the cold ground." On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song:—

CHLORIS.

I.

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair:
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair.

II.

The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,
And o'er the cottage sings:
For nature smiles as sweet, I ween,
To shepherds as to kings.

III.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string
In lordly lighted ha':
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blithe, in the birken shaw.

IV.

The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;
But are their hearts as light as ours,
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

V.

The shepherd, in the flow'ry glen,
In shepherd's phrase will woo:
The courtier tells a finer tale—
But is his heart as true?

VI.

These wild-wood flowers I've pu'd, to deck
That spotless breast o' thine:
The courtier's gems may witness love—
But 'tis na love like mine

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral?—I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of "*ma chere Amie.*" I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last.—Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy, as that other species of the passion,

"Where Love is liberty, and Nature law."

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasure I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase!

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work.

Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song, which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, I have cut down for an English dress to your "Daintie Davie," as follows :—

CHLOE.

I.

It was the charming month of May,
When all the flow'rs were fresh and gay,
One morning, by the break of day,
The youthful, charming Chloe
From peaceful slumber she arose,
Girt on her mantle and her hose,
And o'er the flowery mead she goes,
The youthful, charming Chloe.
Lovely was she by the dawn,
Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

II.

The feather'd people you might see,
Perch'd all around, on every tree,
In notes of sweetest melody
They hail the charming Chloe;
Till, painting gay the eastern skies,
The glorious sun began to rise,
Out-rivall'd by the radiant eyes
Of youthful, charming Chloe.

Lovely was she by the dawn,
Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to "Rothemurche's Rant;" and you have Clarke to consult, as to the set of the air for singing:

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

Tune—"*Rothemurche's Rant.*"

I.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?
Now nature cleeds the flowery lea,
And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joy wi' me,
And say thou'lt be my dearie, O?

II.

And when the welcome simmer-shower
Has cheer'd ilk drooping little flower,
We'll to the breathing woodbine bower
At sultry noon, my dearie, O.

III.

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,
The weary shearer's hameward way;
Thro' yellow waving fields we'll stray,
And talk o' love, my dearie, O.

IV.

And when the howling wintry blast
Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest;
Enclasped to my faithfu' breast,
I'll comfort thee, my dearie, O.
Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks?
Wilt thou be my dearie, O?

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the Museum.

[Burns is the most outspoken of all poets: he is not satisfied with writing the most natural and impassioned songs in the compass of our literature: he must tell us of the stream-banks along which he mused, and name the very ladies whose looks he invoked to aid his inspiration. The lenient and the mild are willing to perceive in these disclosures the secrets of song-making alone: while the rigid and stern regard them as the words of

one, who under pretence of poetic study played the libertine. It is difficult to decide in a matter so delicate: it is said that the wife of Nollekens was of a disposition so jealous, that she would not allow him to have living models to finish his fancy figures by; and as the sculptor could not imagine what he did not see, he was compelled to desist from the manufacture of Venuses and Graces. In like manner, there are some poets who write best from what they see: they look, and talk, and think till their feelings and fancy rise into the region of poesie, and then empty their hearts in the verse. There are others in whose imaginations eternal beauty resides, and who have no occasion to kindle themselves up by the presence of living loveliness. Burns seems to have belonged to the former class: not but that beauty had a permanent abode in his fancy, but the excitement which the voice and looks of woman occasioned, saved him the trouble of drawing upon his imagination. He has explained this in one of his best songs:—

"I see thee dancing on the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,
Thy tempting lip and roguish een—
By heaven and earth, I love thee!"

This is a fine burst of admiration—he kindles more and more every line, till he can endure to gaze no longer on limb, and lip, and eye, and exclaims

"By heaven and earth, I love thee!"

Those acquainted with the Poet's life, and habits of study, will perceive much of both in the sweet song "Of Lassie wi' the lint-white locks." Dumfries is a small town; a few steps carried Burns to green lanes, daisied brae-sides, and quiet stream-banks. Men returning from

labour were sure to meet him "all under the light of the moon," sauntering forth as if he had no aim; his hands behind his back, his hat turned up a little behind by the shortness of his neck, and noting all, yet seeming to note nothing. Yet those who got near without being seen, might hear him humming some old Scottish air, and fitting verses to it—the scene and the season supplying the imagery, and the Jeans, the Nancies, the Phelies, and the Jessies of his admiration furnishing bright eyes, white hands, and waving tresses, as the turn of the song required. In some of the copies of this lyric the last verse runs thus :—

> "And should the howling wintry blast
> Disturb my lassie's midnight rest,
> I'll fauld thee to my faithful breast,
> And comfort thee, my dearie, O !"—ED.]

No. LXIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as "Deil tak the Wars," to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of "Saw ye my Father:" by heavens, the odds is, gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey; so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan, in the "Duenna," to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins—

"When sable night each drooping plant restoring."

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune, as follows.*

Now for my English song to "Nancy's to the Greenwood," &c.:—

---

* See the "Lover's Morning Salute to his Mistress." Our bard remarks upon it, "I could easily throw this into an English mould; but, to my taste, in the simple and the tender of the pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect."—CURRIE.

FAREWELL THOU STREAM.

I.

Farewell thou stream that winding flows
Around Eliza's dwelling!
O mem'ry! spare the cruel throes
Within my bosom swelling:
Condemn'd to drag a hopeless chain,
And yet in secret languish,
To feel a fire in ev'ry vein,
Nor dare disclose my anguish.

II.

Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,
I fain my griefs would cover:
The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan,
Betray the hapless lover.
I know thou doom'st me to despair,
Nor wilt, nor can'st relieve me;
But oh, Eliza, hear one prayer—
For pity's sake forgive me!

III.

The music of thy voice I heard,
Nor wist while it enslav'd me;
I saw thine eyes, yet nothing fear'd,
'Till fears no more had sav'd me:
The unwary sailor thus aghast,
The wheeling torrent viewing;
'Mid circling horrors sinks at last
In overwhelming ruin.

here is an air, "The Caledonian Hunt's De-
t," to which I wrote a song that you will find in
nson.—"Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon;"
air, I think, might find a place among your
dred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know
history of the air? It is curious enough. A
d many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in
r good town,—a gentleman whom, possibly, you
w—was in company with our friend Clarke; and
ing of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent
ition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr.
rke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to
black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve
ie kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly
ipose a Scots air. Certain it is, that, in a
days, Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of
air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and
rections, fashioned into the tune in question.
son, you know, has the same story of the black
's; but this account which I have just given
i, Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago.
w, to show you how difficult it is to trace the
gin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly as-
ted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with
Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in
land among the old women; while, on the other
id, a Countess informed me that the first person
o introduced the air into this country was a ba-
iet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the
tes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man.

How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigie-burn Wood," and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new "Craigie-burn Wood" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but, in a moment when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this, but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour, I know not when to give over.

[Scott has observed, in the songs of Burns written at this period, a certain monotony, arising from his being called upon to fill up the craving void of lyric verse, in the publications of Johnson and Thomson.—"There is sufficient evidence," says Sir Walter, "that even the genius of Burns could not support him in the monotonous task of writing love verses on heaving bosoms and sparkling eyes, and twisting them into such rhythmical forms as might suit the capricious evolutions of Scotch reels and strathspeys. Let no one suppose that we undervalue the songs of Burns. When his soul was intent on suiting a favourite air with words, humorous or tender, as the subject demanded, no poet of our tongue ever displayed higher skill in marrying melody to immortal verse. But the writing a series of songs for large musical collections degenerated into a slavish labour, which no talents could support—led to negligence—and, above all, diverted the Poet from his grand plan of dramatic composition." The remarks of Scott apply forcibly to the song of "Farewell the stream that winding flows." His thoughts, perhaps unwittingly, wandered to the works of other lyrists, and the first verse reminds us of Hamilton's exquisite song, which he had already made the object of his imitation :—

"Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate,
When doom'd to love, and doom'd to languish;
To bear the scornful fair one's hate,
Nor dare disclose his anguish."

For the sake of affording variety, Burns had recourse to imitation, whereas he formerly wrote more directly from the overflowing fulness of his own heart.

Chloris, it is said, was so pleased to see herself reflected in verse and associated with the genius of Burns, that she showed the works of Thomson to her friends or

admirers; and, as they were not few, it soon became publicly known that her flaxen locks, blue eyes, and "passing pleasing tongue" would communicate new charms to northern song. This it seems gave some offence to the more staid and stately of the Poet's friends: they remonstrated with him—not on the impropriety of resorting to the beauty of a farmer's daughter to bestow grace or tenderness on his strains, but because he had given her copies of his songs both in manuscript and print, which, in the careless gaiety of her nature, she exhibited to the world. The Poet saw that he had acted imprudently; a mutual friend was employed to reclaim the manuscripts: the lady gave them up with reluctance, but retained, and, perhaps, still retains, the work of Thomson.—ED.]

No. LXIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

15*th November*, 1794.

MY GOOD SIR:

SINCE receiving your last, I have had another erview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. e thinks the "Caledonian Hunt is more Bacchalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends to you to match the air accordingly. Pray did ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish s are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? ie first part of the air is generally low, and suited a man's voice, and the second part in many inances cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a male voice. A song, thus performed, makes an reeable variety, but few of ours are written in this rm: I wish you would think of it in some of those at remain. The only one of the kind you have nt me is admirable, and will be an universal vourite.

Your verses for "Rothemurche" are so sweetly storal, and your serenade to Chloris, for "Deil k the Wars," so passionately tender, that I have

sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for "My lodging is on the cold ground," is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted with it. Some of your Chlorises, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks!

"Farewell thou stream that winding flows," I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after "Nancy:" at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish, and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for "Dainty Davie" will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

[The anecdotes promised by the Poet were but in part written: a rich treat has thus been lost to all his admirers. He would have given us a chapter on the human heart, informed us of the various feelings and

impulses under which he wrote his lyrics—the hour and the season in which they were produced—the walks in which he mused, and the heroines who lent look and life to the strains. Of each we would have known as much as we do of Highland Mary; nor could this have been otherwise than acceptable to the ladies themselves. We have been left to tradition, or conjecture, or accidental intimations; and the honour done to the charms of one has, we fear, sometimes been conferred on another. The Poet wrote notes of another kind on Johnson's Museum: these will be found in a future volume. They are at once old and new, serious and comic, full of anecdotes and scraps of quaint and curious song, and marked everywhere with that peculiar spirit and feeling which distinguished Burns amongst all the sons of Caledonia.—ED.]

No. LXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

You see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the tedium of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old:—

O PHILLY, HAPPY BE THAT DAY.

Tune—"*The Sow's Tail.*"

HE.

O Philly, happy be that day,
When roving through the gather'd hay,
My youthfu' heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, ay I bless the grove
Where first I own'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou didst pledge the powers above,
To be my ain dear Willy.

HE.

As songsters of the early year
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,
So ilka day to me mair dear
And charming is my Philly.

SHE.

As on the brier the budding rose
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom grows
The love I bear my Willy.

HE.

The milder sun and bluer sky
That crown my harvest cares wi' joy,
Were ne'er sae welcome to my eye
As is a sight o' Philly.

SHE.

The little swallow's wanton wing,
Tho' wafting o'er the flowery spring,
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,
As meeting o' my Willy.

HE.

The bee that thro' the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the opening flower,
Compar'd wi' my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o' Philly.

SHE.

The woodbine in the dewy weet
When evening shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet
As is a kiss o' Willy.

HE.

Let fortune's wheel at random rin,
And fools may tyne, and knaves may win;
My thoughts are a' bound up in ane,
And that's my ain dear Philly.

SHE.

What's a' the joys that gowd can gie!
I care na wealth a single flie;
The lad I love's the lad for me,
And that's my ain dear Willy.

Tell me, honestly, how you like it; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name, Philly; but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has, to my ear, a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as

my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *eloignée* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you, as to the air "Craigie-burn Wood," that a chorus would, in some degree, spoil the effect; and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with "Rothemurche;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," a chorus goes, to my taste, well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with "Roy's Wife" as well as "Rothemurche." In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting-note in both tunes has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of:

Try, { *O Roy's* Wife of Aldivalloch. / *O Lassie* wi' the lint-white locks.

and

compare with { *Roy's* Wife of Aldivalloch. / *Lassie* wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

"The Caledonian Hunt" is so charming, that it

would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, "Todlin Hame" is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and "Andrew and his cutty Gun" is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—"Lumps o' pudding."

CONTENTED WI' LITTLE.

Tune—"*Lumps o' Pudding.*"

I.

Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp, as they're creepin alang,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

II.

I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought;
But man is a sodger, and life is a faught:
My mirth and guid humour are coin in my pouch,
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

III.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa',
A night o' guid fellowship sowthers it a':
When at the blithe end o' our journey at last,
Wha the deil ever thinks o' the road he has past?

IV.

Blind chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way;
Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jade gae:
Come ease, or come travail; come pleasure or pain;
My warst word is—"Welcome, and welcome again!"

If you do not relish the air, I will send it to Johnson.

[Pastoral verse exhibits many examples of the dramatic mode of composition: compliments and scorn, praise and censure, are bandied about by shepherds and shepherdesses, till the subject-matter is exhausted. In like manner, Willy and Philly in this lyric carry on the pleasant strife of compliment, till flowery comparisons grow scant and the lovers are reduced to silence. Phillis is a favourite in northern song: in the present instance it is the true name of the heroine. Some of our dramatic songs are humorous and full of life:—

"Gude'en to you, kimmer,
And how do you fare?
A pint o' the best o't,
And twa pints mair.
Gude'en to you, kimmer,
And how do you do?
Hic, hiccup, quo' the kimmer,
Better that I'm fou."

One of the happiest examples of free wit and humour, may be found in the "Auld Gudeman:"—

HE.

"The auld gudeman that thou tells of,
The country kens where he was born,
Was but a silly poor vagabond,
And ilka ane leugh him to scorn:
For he did spend, and make an end
Of gear that his forefathers wan;
He gart the poor stand frae the door,—
Sae tell nae mair o' thy auld gudeman.

SHE.

"My heart alake is liken to break,
When I think on my winsome John:
His blinkan e'e and gate sae free,
Was naething like thee, thou dos end drone.
His rosie cheek and flaxen hair,
And a skin as white as onie swan,
Was large and tall, and comely withal,
And thoult never be like my auld gudeman."

Tradition has recorded that Burns wrote "Contented wi' little" in a moment of hope, when fortune seemed inclined to pause in her persecution, and the frozen finger of the Excise pointed to the situation of supervisor. Yet hope did not hinder him from thinking of independence, even while keeping sorrow and care at bay with a cup and song: he forgot not that his freedom was a "lairdship nae monarch dare touch." Of songs which honour fire-side happiness and domestic felicity, we have but few, compared with those which treat of love and wine; yet of these some are truly excellent: and, among the latter, who can refuse to include

"Contented wi' little and cantie wi' mair!"—ED.]

No. LXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

SINCE yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a ›uple of English stanzas, by way of an English ›ng to "Roy's Wife." You will allow me, that in ıis instance, my English corresponds in sentiment ith the Scottish:—

CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS.

Tune—"*Roy's Wife.*"

I.

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Well thou know'st my aching heart—
And canst thou leave me thus for pity?
Is this thy plighted, fond regard,
Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?
Is this thy faithful swain's reward—
An aching, broken heart, my Katy?

II.

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—
But not a love like mine, my Katy!
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Well thou know'st my aching heart—
And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth) that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have at last gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument: it is composed of three parts; the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton-ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn, until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have, when the corn-stems are green and full-grown.

The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one back-ventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. "Pride in poets is nae sin," and, I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

[To this address in the character of a forsaken lover, a reply was found on the part of the lady, among the MSS. of Burns, evidently in a female hand-writing. The temptation to give it to the public is irresistible; and if in so doing offence should be given to the fair authoress, the beauty of her verses must plead our excuse:—

Tune—*Roy's Wife.*"

"Stay my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay my Willie—yet believe me,
For, ah! thou know'st na' every pang
Wad wring my bosom, shouldst thou leave me.
Tell me that thou yet art true,
And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven,
And when this heart proves fause to thee,
Yon sun shall cease its course in heaven.

"But to think I was betrayed,
That falsehood e'er our loves should sunder!
To take the flow'ret to my breast,
And find the guilefu' serpent under.

"Could I hope thou'dst ne'er deceive,
Celestial pleasures, might I choose 'em,
I'd slight, nor seek in other spheres
That heaven I'd find within thy bosom.
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
For, ah! thou know'st na' every pang
Wad wring my bosom, shouldst thou leave me."

This reply was written by a young and beautiful Englishwoman—Mrs. Riddell. She alludes to her quarrel with the Poet: she took a flower to her bosom and found a serpent under. In that metaphorical way she intimated that the Poet had the presumption to attempt to salute her—a piece of forwardness which a coldness of two years' continuance more than punished.—ED.]

No. LXVII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

29th November, 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you, never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have, all along, condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d'œuvre*. "Lumps of pudding" shall certainly make one of my family dishes: you have cooked it so capitally that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast, when you find yourself in good spirits: these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some

of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, "The Soldier's Return," to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognizes her ain dear Willy, "She gaz'd, she reddened like a rose." The three lines immediately following are, no doubt, more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche, by the side of Burns, in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of any thing but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says, he remembers to have heard one in his younger days (made of wood instead of your bone), and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

No. LXVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you that the jacobite song in the Museum, to "There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes home," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:—

MY NANNIE'S AWA.

Tune—"*There'll never be peace*," &c.

I.

Now in her green mantle blithe nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw;
But to me it's delightless—my Nannie's awa!

II.

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie's awa!

III.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn,
The shepherd to warn o' the gray-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night fa',
Give over for pity—my Nannie's awa!

IV.

Come autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and gray,
And soothe me with tidings o' nature's decay:
The dark dreary winter, and wild driving snaw,
Alane can delight me—now Nannie's awa!

How does this please you?—As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my "Sodger's Return," it must certainly be at—"She gaz'd." The interesting dubity and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me as things of which a master will make a great deal.—In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

[Rumour says that Clarinda was the Nannie whose absence Burns laments in this pretty pastoral. His thoughts were often in Edinburgh. On festive occasions, when toasts were called for, Syme used to exclaim, "Come, we all know what Burns will give—here's Mrs. Mac." The laverock was a favourite bird with him; and many happy images it has supplied him with. It is, indeed, pleasant both to eye and ear to be out by gray day-

light on a summer morning, when a thousand larks are ascending into the brightening air; the warblings of some are near, and the songsters may be seen, a stone-throw high, mounting as they sing: others are unseen in the cloud; and the whole atmosphere is full of melody.

The sketch of the "Sodger's Return," by Allan, was comparatively a failure; the Poet intimated the right point of time; but to express suspense, gushing fondness, and roguish playfulness was too much for the painter, and perhaps for his art. The five succeeding songs, compositions, it is believed, of this season, supply a short pause in the correspondence with Thomson, and show us what Burns was about during

"The mirk night o' December."—ED.]

O WHA IS SHE THAT LO'ES ME.

Tune—"*Morag.*"

I.

O wha is she that lo'es me,
And has my heart a-keeping?
O sweet is she that lo'es me,
As dews o' simmer weeping,
In tears the rose-buds steeping!
O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer;
O that's the queen of womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

II.

If thou shalt meet a lassie
In grace and beauty charming,
That e'en thy chosen lassie,
Erewhile thy breast sae warming,
Had ne'er sic powers alarming.

III.

If thou hadst heard her talking,
And thy attentions plighted,
That ilka body talking,
But her by thee is slighted,
And thou art all delighted.

IV.

If thou hast met this fair one;
When frae her thou hast parted,
If every other fair one,
But her, thou hast deserted,
And thou art broken-hearted;
O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer;
O that's the queen o' womankind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

[Of the air of Morag the Poet was passionately fond; yet it cannot be said that he was more than commonly successful in wedding it to words. The measure which the tune requires is cramp and difficult, and the sentiment is interrupted before it has well begun to flow. This song was found among the papers of Burns; the *exact* period of its composition is not known, nor has the *heroine* been named.—ED.]

CALEDONIA.

TUNE—"*Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*"

I.

There was once a day—but old Time then was young—
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt, or to pasture, or do what she would:
Her heav'nly relations there fixed her reign,
And pledg'd her their godheads to warrant it good.

II.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred the heroine grew:
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore
"Whoe'er shall provoke thee, th' encounter shall rue!"
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn;
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement, the hounds and the horn.

III.

Long quiet she reign'd; till thitherward steers
A flight of bold eagles from Adria's strand:
Repeated, successive, for many long years,
They darken'd the air, and they plunder'd the land:
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,
They'd conquer'd and ruin'd a world beside;
She took to her hills, and her arrows let fly—
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

IV.

The fell harpy-raven took wing from the north,
The scourge of the seas, and the dread of the shore;
The wild Scandinavian boar issu'd forth
To wanton in carnage, and wallow in gore:
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
No arts could appease them, no arms could repel;
But brave Caledonia in vain they assailed,
As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell.

V.

The Cameleon-savage disturb'd her repose,
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife;
Provok'd beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life:
The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
Oft prowling, ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood:
But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
He learned to fear in his own native wood.

VI.

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd, and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run:
For brave Caledonia immortal must be;
I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle-triangle, the figure we'll choose,
The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base;
But brave Caledonia's the hypothenuse;
Then ergo, she'll match them, and match them always.

[There is both knowledge of history and elegance of allegory in this singular song; but the most remarkable part is the conclusion, where the Poet proves, by mathematical demonstration, the immortality of Caledonia. It was one of those pieces on which he set little store; but it may be observed of this as it has been remarked of others of his productions, that it bears the stamp of national love and of a manly understanding. Indeed, in the hastiest snatch he ever penned, some happy touch will be found denoting the hand of the master—some singular thought or felicitous line—easy to him and unattainable to others.—Ed.]

O LAY THY LOOF IN MINE, LASS.

Tune—"*Cordwainer's March.*"

I.

O lay thy loof in mine, lass,
In mine, lass, in mine, lass;
And swear on thy white hand, lass,
That thou wilt be my ain.
A slave to love's unbounded sway,
He aft has wrought me meikle wae;
But now he is my deadly fae,
Unless thou be my ain.

II.

There's monie a lass has broke my rest,
That for a blink I hae lo'ed best;
But thou art queen within my breast,
For ever to remain.
O lay thy loof in mine, lass,
In mine, lass, in mine, lass;
And swear on thy white hand, lass,
That thou wilt be my ain.

[The air for which these verses were written is commonly played on King Crispin's day, when the shoemakers hold a sort of saturnalia, and with pennons displayed, and trumpet and drum, march through our northern borough towns, attired like kings, princes of the blood, senators, ambassadors, and warriors. The

ctacle is very imposing; the "princes of a day" be-
e with wonderful decorum; and, save that it is more
erly, it resembles closely a real coronation pageant.
: gentle craft of Crispin has furnished matter for much
se, serious as well as sarcastic. If there be truth in
g, Satan supplied the tools of Cromwell's soldiers,
) instructed the folk of the north, in what Dr. John-
calls "the art of accommodating men's feet with
es:"—

"There came souters out o' Mar,
And souters twice as far,
And souters out o' Peterhead,
Wi' no a tooth in a' their head,
Wi' rugging and tugging leather;
They came all in a flock together;
And auld King Crispin was there himsel',
And he looked down to hell—
Where he saw some barked leather to sell.
Quo' he may I swing in a hair tether,
But I'll gae down and price that leather.
He gat down, I canna tell ye how,
But when he came up he had a burnt mou'.
He bouked nine pints o' oil and a little wax,
Crooked gullies five or sax,
And a foot-fang to haud them a' fast,
There were inseam awls and outseam awls,
Wi' pegging awls and closing awls;
And when he thought the foul fiends a' gane,
Up came a patie-boy and a sharping-stane."

his singular old rhyme I heard repeated when a boy, by
lrew Graham, a mason, who lived on the border.—ED.]

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

Tune—"*Killicrankie.*"

I.

O wha will to Saint Stephen's house,
To do our errands there, man?
O wha will to Saint Stephen's house,
O' th' merry lads of Ayr, man?
Or will we send a man-o'-law?
Or will we send a sodger?
Or him wha led o'er Scotland a'
The meikle Ursa-Major?

II.

Come, will ye court a noble lord,
Or buy a score o' lairds, man?
For worth and honour pawn their word,
Their vote shall be Glencaird's, man?
Ane gies them coin, ane gies them wine,
Anither gies them clatter;
Anbank, wha guess'd the ladies' taste,
He gies a Fête Champetre.

III.

When Love and Beauty heard the news,
The gay green-woods amang, man;
Where gathering flowers and busking bowers,
They heard the blackbird's sang, man;
A vow, they seal'd it with a kiss
Sir Politicks to fetter,
As their's alone, the patent-bliss,
To hold a Fête Champetre.

IV.

Then mounted Mirth, on gleesome wing,
O'er hill and dale she flew, man;
Ilk wimpling burn, ilk crystal spring,
Ilk glen and shaw she knew, man:
She summon'd every social sprite,
That sports by wood or water,
On th' bonny banks of Ayr to meet,
And keep this Fête Champetre.

V.

Cauld Boreas, wi' his boisterous crew,
Were bound to stakes like kye, man;
And Cynthia's car, o' silver fu',
Clamb up the starry sky, man:
Reflected beams dwell in the streams,
Or down the current shatter;
The western breeze steals thro' the trees,
To view this Fête Champetre.

VI.

How many a robe sae gaily floats!
What sparkling jewels glance, man!
To Harmony's enchanting notes,
As moves the mazy dance, man.
The echoing wood, the winding flood,
Like Paradise did glitter,
When angels met, at Adam's yett,
To hold their Fête Champetre.

VII.

When Politics came there, to mix
And make his ether-stane, man!
He circled round the magic ground,
But entrance found he nane, man:
He blushed for shame, he quat his name,
Forswore it, every letter,
Wi' humble prayer to join and share
This festive Fête Champetre.

[The occasion of this ballad was as follows:—when Mr. Cunninghame, of Enterkin, came to his estate, two mansion-houses on it, Enterkin and Anbank, were both in a ruinous state. Wishing to introduce himself with some *éclat* to the country, he got temporary erections made on the banks of Ayr, tastefully decorated with

shrubs and flowers, for a supper and ball, to which most of the respectable families in the county were invited. It was a novelty in the county, and attracted much notice. A dissolution of parliament was soon expected, and this festivity was thought to be an introduction to a canvass for representing the county. Several other candidates were spoken of, particularly Sir John Whitefoord, then residing at Cloncaird, commonly pronounced Glencaird, and Mr. Boswell, the well-known biographer of Dr. Johnson. The political views of this festive assemblage, which are alluded to in the ballad, if they ever existed, were however laid aside, as Mr. C. did not canvass the county.—GILBERT BURNS.]

HERE'S A HEALTH.

Tune—*" Here's a Health to them that's awa."*

I.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
And wha winna wish guid luck to our cause,
May never guid luck be their fa'!
It's guid to be merry and wise,
It's guid to be honest and true,
It's guid to support Caledonia's cause,
And bide by the buff and the blue.

II.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to Charlie the chief of the clan,
Altho' that his band be sma'.
May liberty meet wi' success!
May prudence protect her frae evil!
May tyrants and tyranny tine in the mist,
And wander their way to the devil!

III.

Here's a health to them that's awa',
Here's a health to them that's awa;
Here's a health to Tammie, the Norland laddie,
That lives at the lug o' the law!
Here's freedom to him that wad read,
Here's freedom to him that wad write!
There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
But they wham the truth wad indite.

IV.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's Chieftain M'Leod, a chieftain worth gowd,
Tho' bred amang mountains o' snaw!
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
And wha winna wish guid luck to our cause,
May never guid luck be their fa'!

[The buff and blue of whiggery had triumphed over the white rose of jacobitism in the heart of Burns when he composed this song: Charlie Stewart had given place to Charlie Fox, and the chiefs of one faction had supplanted the chiefs of another. It is a sort of parody on a song in the Museum, which, with some old words in it, has been mistaken for an ancient strain by sundry skilful antiquarians:—

"Here's a health to them that's away,
Here's a health to them that's away,
Here's a health to them that were here short syne,
But canna be here the day.

"It's gude to be merry and wise,
It's gude to be honest and true;
It's gude to be off wi' the auld luve
Before ye be on wi' the new."

The old verses from which these just quoted were manufactured had a jacobitical meaning in them: they contained an advice which, if we may credit Dr. King's Memoirs, many of the first noblemen in England as well as Scotland stood greatly in need of:—

"It's gude to be merry and wise,
It's gude to be honest and true,
It's gude to be off wi' the old king,
Afore ye are on wi' the new."

The Charlie of the song of Burns was Charles Fox; Tammie was Thomas Erskine; and M'Leod, the chief of that clan, was their firm and resolute friend.—Ed.]

No. LXVIII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I FEAR for my songs; however, a few may pleas yet originality is a coy feature in composition, an in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disa pears altogether. For these three thousand yea we poetic folks have been describing the spring, f instance; and, as the spring continues the same, the must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. these said rhyming folks.

A great critic (Aikin) on songs says that love a wine are the exclusive themes for song-writin The following is on neither subject, and cons quently is no song; but will be allowed, I thin to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, i verted into rhyme:—

IS THERE, FOR HONEST POVERTY.

Tune—"*For a' that, and a' that.*"

I.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that!
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil's obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that!

II.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin gray, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man, for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that!

III.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd—a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that!

IV.

A king can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

V.

Then let us pray that come it may—
As come it will for a' that—
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle;* for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigie-burn Wood?"—

CRAIGIE-BURN WOOD.

I.

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigie-burn,
And blithe awakes the morrow;
But a' the pride o' spring's return
Can yield me nocht but sorrow.

II.

I see the flowers and spreading trees,
I hear the wild birds singing;
But what a weary wight can please,
And care his bosom wringing?

III.

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet dare na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.

IV.

If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love anither,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they'll wither.

Farewell! God bless you.

[In his noble song, "A man's a man for a' that," the Poet has vindicated the natural and unalienable rights of his species—he has distinguished between our social condition as contemplated by God, and that artificial state brought about by the perverse ingenuity of man. In resorting to first principles, he is compelled to speak with contempt of hereditary rank, and treat it as a manifest usurpation. That genius and enterprize should raise themselves in society seems as natural as for the sun to shine; but that they will continue in the family line from generation to generation, no person but a prince expects. God made genius personal—not hereditary: he gave the wisdom to Solomon which he refused to Rehoboam: and even in our own country, noble houses may be pointed out of which nothing remains noble save the name. Burns could not but feel that wealth, not talent,

is the way to titles: the most glorious persons in British story went to the dust with plain "master" on their coffin-lids:—Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Locke. There should be rank and honours for all those who greatly distinguish themselves in literature and arts, as well as in arms. He who would truly contemplate the history of a country should consider that its greatness arises from the union of many qualities: Watt deserves a place as well as Wellington: nor are the achievements of Scott to be forgotten in the account of battles by sea and shore. Titles should flow from the fountain of honour readily and unsolicited to all who are illustrious: instead of which they flow almost solely to the wealthy. Those who have amassed fortunes by all manner of speculation, and have become swollen and big, like striped pumpkins flourishing on heaps of dung, are sure to have the sword laid on their shoulders, or their brows enclosed in coronets. There is nothing left for genius but to join in the song of Burns—

"Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that."

In this sentiment men of talent should join more earnestly, since it has been publicly declared that genius is so supremely blest as not at all to require other distinction—a doctrine which decrees to dulness the star and the garter—

"Amen—and virtue is its own reward."—Ed.]

No. LXIX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 30th January, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR:

I THANK you heartily for "Nannie's awa," as ell as for "Craigie-burn," which I think a very mely pair. Your observation on the difficulty original writing in a number of efforts, in the me style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has ain and again excited my wonder to find you ntinually surmounting this difficulty, in the many lightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la gatelle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be cluded in my list.

[In these cold words "Your *vive la bagatelle* song, For a' that,' shall undoubtedly be included in my t," Thomson accepts the present of a song which will e while the language lasts. It is likely that the verses ere in his sight too bold, and that he would have pre-red lines with—

> "Twin pigeons billing, sparrows treading,
> Fair emblems of a fruitful wedding,"

a reverend divine, Dean Swift, expresses it.—ED.]

No. LXX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

HERE is another trial at your favourite air :—

Tune—"*Let me in this ae night.*"

I.

O lassie, art thou sleeping yet,
Or art thou waking, I would wit?
For love has bound me hand and foot,
And I would fain be in, jo.
O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
For pity's sake this ae night,
O rise and let me in, jo!

II.

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,
Nae star blinks thro' the driving sleet:
Tak pity on my weary feet,
And shield me frae the rain, jo.

III.

The bitter blast that round me blaws,
Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;
The cauldness o' thy heart's the cause
Of a' my grief and pain, jo.
O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
For pity's sake this ae night,
O rise and let me in, jo!

HER ANSWER.

I.

O tell na me o' wind and rain,
Upbraid na me wi' cauld disdain!
Gae back the gate ye cam again,
I winna let you in, jo.
I tell you now this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
And ance for a' this ae night,
I winna let you in, jo!

II.

The snellest blast, at mirkest hours,
That round the pathless wand'rer pours,
Is nocht to what poor she endures,
That's trusted faithless man, jo.

III.

The sweetest flower that deck'd the mead,
Now trodden like the vilest weed:
Let simple maid the lesson read,
The weird may be her ain, jo.

IV.

The bird that charm'd his summer-day,
Is now the cruel fowler's prey;
Let witless, trusting woman say
How aft her fate's the same, jo.
I tell you now this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
And ance for a' this ae night,
I winna let you in, jo!

I do not know whether it will do.

[If Burns drew his song of "A man's a man for a' that," solely from his own mind and fancy, there is no question that he is indebted to an old strain for the idea of these twin lyrics. He has changed the lead into gold, and dismissed a deal of dross: still the sentiment belongs to the olden times. These are part of the old words:—

"O lassie, art thou sleeping yet,
Or are you waking, I wad wit?
For love has bound me hand and fit,
And I wad fain be in, O.
O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
O let me in this ae night,
Or I'll ne'er come back again, O.

"The night it is baith wind and weet,
The morn it will be snaw and sleet;
My shoon are freezing to my feet,
Wi' standing here alane, O.

"I am the laird o' Windy wa's,
I come na here without a cause;
And I hae gotten mony fa's,
Wad killed a thousand men, O.—

"My father's waukrife in his sleep,
My mither the cha'mer keys does keep,
And a' the doors sae chirp and cheep,
I daurna let you in, O.
Sae gae ye're ways this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night,
O gae ye're ways this ae night,
I daurna let ye in, O."

It is said that the thoughts of Burns wandered to Woodlee-Park, and his feud with Mrs. Riddel, when he composed these songs. The lady in the old verses resisted nothing like so stoutly or successfully as the modern heroine is made to do.—ED.]

No. LXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Ecclefechan, 7th February, 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON:

You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late), I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village. I have gone forward, but snows, of ten feet deep, have impeded my progress: I have tried to "gae back the gate I cam again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service!

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and, Heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know

it—"We'll gang nae mair to yon town?" I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye, to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

[Ecclefechan is a little thriving village in Annandale: nor is it more known for its hiring fairs than for beautiful lasses and active young men. The latter, when cudgel-playing was regularly taught to the youth of the Scottish lowlands, distinguished themselves by skill and courage; they did not, however, enjoy their fame without contention: they had frequent feuds with the lads of Lockerby, and their laurels were put in jeopardy. On an old New Year's-day, some thirty years ago, Ecclefechan sent some two hundred "sticks" against Lockerby: they drew themselves up beside an old fortalice, and intimated their intention of keeping their post till the sun went down:—they bit their thumbs, flourished their oak saplings, and said, "We wad like to see wha wad hinder us." This was a matter of joy to the lads of Lockerby: an engagement immediately took place, and Ecclefechan seemed likely to triumph, when—I grieve to write it—a douce elder of the kirk seizing a stick from one who seemed unskilful in using it, rushed forward, broke the enemy's ranks, pushed the lads of Ecclefechan rudely out of the place, and exclaimed, "That's the way we did lang syne!" The Poet paid Ecclefechan many a visit, friendly and official, and even wrought its almost unpronounceable name into a couple of songs.—Ed.]

No. LXXII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear Sir, for two epistles, one containing "Let me in this ae night;" and the other from Ecclefechan, proving that, drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy." You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song, as it now stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for "O wat ye wha's in yon town."

THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

Tune—"*Push about the jorum.*"

The following song was written, April, 1795. The Poet sent it to Mr. Jackson, editor of the Dumfries Journal: the original manuscript, through the kindness of my friend Mr. Milligan, is now before me.—Ed.

I.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, Sir,
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, Sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!

II.

O let us not, like snarling tykes,
In wrangling be divided;
Till slap come in an unco loon
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted!

III.

The kettle o' the kirk and state,
Perhaps a clout may fail in't;
But deil a foreign tinkler loon
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it;
By heaven! the sacrilegious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it.

IV.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
And the wretch his true-born brother,
Who would set the mob aboon the throne,
May they be damned together!
Who will not sing, "God save the King,"
Shall hang as high's the steeple;
But while we sing, "God save the King,"
We'll ne'er forget the people.

[When the French found that we not only hesitated to overthrow all that was old and begin anew; but that we resented their interference in the affairs of other nations as well as our own, they resolved to come over, sword in hand, and force the freedom upon us which we refused to take. This threat called up the spirit of the island: and Burns enrolled himself among the gentlemen volunteers of Dumfries, and stood shoulder to shoulder

with his friends Maxwell, Staig, and Syme. At a public dinner given to the officers of the corps, the Poet was expected to utter something either in verse or prose—he said nothing, for his health was then failing: but he did not miss to observe that his silence was misinterpreted. On going home he wrote "The Dumfries Volunteers." The song became popular at once, and was soon to be heard on hill and dale; for the peasantry of Scotland sing at the sheepfold and at the plough, and cheer themselves with verse in all ordinary pursuits of life. To extend its influence still farther, he had it printed with the music upon a separate sheet by Johnson, and thus it penetrated into the nobleman's drawing-room as well as into the farmer's spence.

Some of the allusions are local, and require explanation. If Nith ran to Corsincon, it would run backward, and up hill too. The Criffel is a high green mountain on the Scottish side of the Solway, and is said, in the legends of the district, to be the materials which a witch had collected to choke up the sea, that the English army might march over dry-shod. Luckily a devout shepherd came to his door in the gray of the morning, and on seeing the unsonsie carlin marching past with a mountain on her back, exclaimed "God guide us!—what next?—the very hills are leaving us." Down dropt the mountain, and away flew the witch, and never renewed her strange attempt. The sentiments of the song are understood by all ranks—they echo what every true British bosom feels.—Ed.]

No. LXXIV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

ADDRESS TO THE WOOD-LARK.

Tune—"*Where'll bonnie Ann lie.*"
Or, "*Loch-Eroch Side.*"

I.

O STAY, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay!
Nor quit for me the trembling spray;
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining.

II.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that would touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

III.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

IV.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;
O' speechless grief and dark despair:
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair!
Or my poor heart is broken!

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

Tune—"*Ay wakin', O.*"

I.

Long, long the night,
Heavy comes the morrow,
While my soul's delight
Is on her bed of sorrow.
Can I cease to care?
Can I cease to languish?
While my darling fair
Is on the couch of anguish?

II.

Every hope is fled,
Every fear is terror;
Slumber even I dread,
Every dream is horror.

III.

Hear me, Pow'rs divine!
Oh, in pity hear me!
Take aught else of mine,
But my Chloris spare me!
Long, long the night,
Heavy comes the morrow,
While my soul's delight
Is on her bed of sorrow.

How do you like the foregoing?—The Irish air, "Humours of Glen," is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the "Poor Soldier," there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows:—

CALEDONIA.

Tune—"*Humours of Glen.*"

I.

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom:
Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly unseen;
For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
A listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

II.

Tho' rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld CALEDONIA's blast on the wave;
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they?—The haunt o' the tyrant and slave!
The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,
The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save love's willing fetters, the chains o' his Jean.

'TWAS NA HER BONNIE BLUE EEN.

Tune—"*Laddie lie near me.*"

I.

'Twas na her bonnie blue een was my ruin;
Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing:
'Twas the dear smile when naebody did mind us,
'Twas the bewitching, sweet stown glance o' kindness.

II.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,
Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me!
But tho' fell fortune should fate us to sever,
Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever.

III.

Mary, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,
And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest!
And thou'rt the angel that never can alter—
Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

[The "Address to the Woodlark" is composed to a tune which carries the not unpleasant burthen of very old and humorous verses:—

"Where will bonnie Annie lie,
Annie lie, Annie lie,
Where will bonnie Annie lie,
Till she shoot owre the simmer?
Down among the feather beds,
The feather beds, the feather beds,
Down among the feather beds,
Wi' many a cannie kimmer."

There are other verses in which these words are varied, beginning

"Where will our gudeman lie?"

The song on the "Illness of Chloris," is one of the Poet's brief and happy things: it is modelled on an old lyric, still popular in some parts of the north, and justly so:—

"Ay waking, eh,
Waking ay, and weary,
Sleep I canna get,
For thinking on my dearie.
I have fallen in love
Wi' a' the world's darling,
An' canna see the sun
For bonnie May Macfarlane."

ther version throws in a spice of the ridiculous :

" I sat down and wrote
My true love a letter;
My lad canna read,
I love him a' the better.
Ay waking, oh,
Waking ay, and weary,
Hope is sweet, but ne'er
Sae sweet as thee, my dearie."

ıe exquisite song of "Caledonia" unites domestic tion with love of country, and is exceedingly popular. heroine was Mrs. Burns, who so charmed the Poet inging it with taste and feeling, that he declared it e one of his luckiest lyrics. She sang with ease and licity: science adorned without injuring nature: her "wood note wild" was said to be almost un-lled.

is remark-worthy, that the song in honour of his was accompanied by two in honour of his friend. "'Twas na her bonnie blue een were my ruin," we ndebted to Jean Lorimer. It is true that "Mary" rought into the texture of the verse: but copies have seen with the first line of the last verse running :—

" Jeanie, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest."

ıs already been intimated that this Nithsdale beauty a sort of lay-figure, on which the muse hung her ands.—ED.]

No. LXXV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

You must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the Cotter's Saturday Night is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic "Address to the Wood-lark," your elegant "Panegyric on Caledonia," and your affecting verses on "Chloris's illness." Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song, to "Laddie, lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

No. LXXVI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

HOW CRUEL ARE THE PARENTS.

Tune—"*John Anderson, my jo.*"

I.

How cruel are the parents
Who riches only prize,
And, to the wealthy booby,
Poor woman sacrifice!
Meanwhile the hapless daughter
Has but a choice of strife;
To shun a tyrant father's hate,
Become a wretched wife.

II.

The ravening hawk pursuing,
The trembling dove thus flies,
To shun impelling ruin
Awhile her pinions tries;
Till of escape despairing,
No shelter or retreat,
She trusts the ruthless falconer,
And drops beneath his feet!

MARK YONDER POMP.

Tune—"*Deil tak the wars.*"

I.

Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion
Round the wealthy, titled bride:
But when compar'd with real passion,
Poor is all that princely pride.
What are the showy treasures?
What are the noisy pleasures?
The gay gaudy glare of vanity and art:
The polished jewel's blaze
May draw the wond'ring gaze,
And courtly grandeur bright
The fancy may delight,
But never, never can come near the heart.

II.

But, did you see my dearest Chloris
In simplicity's array;
Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,
Shrinking from the gaze of day.
O then, the heart alarming,
And all resistless charming,
In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing soul!
Ambition would disown
The world's imperial crown,
Even Avarice would deny
His worshipp'd deity,
And feel thro' every vein Love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer ır orders: your tailor could not be more punc- l. I am just now in a high fit of poetizing, pro- ed that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure . If you can in a post or two administer a little the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will :e your humble servant's phrenzy to any height ı want. I am at this moment "holding high verse" with the Muses, and have not a word to ɔw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

Well might the Poet exclaim to Thomson, "See how ıswer your orders: your tailor could not be more ctual." It is really surprising with what patience he :inued from day to day measuring out words to all ıner of tunes: now lively, then mournful: tender one r, sarcastic another: idolizing women in one verse, preferring in the next the Hawick gill and the tappit . His resources seem to have been wonderful. The g to the tune of "John Anderson" is altered from old English one: it preaches a sermon on matrimo- alliances, which all believe and no one obeys: ents still useundue influence with their children, and, le securing a fleeting splendour, are heedless of entail- a lasting wretchedness. The song to the air of ɛil tak the wars" is original, but has not the fine :al flow of other of his songs: Chloris did not al- s rightly inspire him.—Ed.]

No. LXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

TEN thousand thanks for your elegant present; though I am ashamed of the value of it, being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shewn it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production. My phiz is sae kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, d—n'd wee rumble-gairie urchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief, which even at twa days auld I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol; after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.

Give the enclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednes-

day I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

[The picture alluded to was painted from the "Cotter's Saturday Night:" it displays at once the talent and want of taste of the ingenious artist. The scene is a solemn one: but the serenity of the moment is disturbed by what some esteem as a beauty, namely, the attempt to cut the top of the cat's tail, by the little merry urchin, seated on the floor. The unity of the sentiment is destroyed: it jars with the harmony of the rest of the picture as much as a snail does in crawling in the bosom of a new opened rose. This sense of propriety is required in such compositions: Burns was a great master in it: he introduced true love, domestic gladness, and love of country along with devotion in his noble poem of "The Cotter's Saturday Night," but he never dreamed of throwing in any of his ludicrous or humorous touches—all is as much in keeping as in the best conceived picture.—Ed.]

No. LXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

13th May, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again, by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of "William and Margaret," and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

No. LXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

"Whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad," the tion of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here what I think is an improvement:—

"O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Tho' father, and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad."

fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest ıe Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a ɜ whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, whom the Loves have armed with lightning, a ɔne, herself the heroine of the song, insists on ımendment, and dispute her commands if you !

THIS IS NO MY AIN LASSIE.

Tune—"*This is no my ain house.*"

I.

O this is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel kɜn I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.
I see a form, I see a face,
Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
It wants, to me, the witching grace,
The kind love that's in her e'e.

II.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
And lang has had my heart in thrall;
And ay it charms my very saul,
The kind love that's in her e'e.

III.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink, by a' unseen;
But gleg as light are lovers' e'en,
When kind love is in the e'e.

IV.

It may escape the courtly sparks,
It may escape the learned clerks;
But weel the watching lover marks
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The enclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I enclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song "O bonnie was

n rosy brier." I do not know whether I am ;ht; but that song pleases me, and as it is ex-emely probable that Clarke's newly-roused celes-l spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of dolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish rses to the air of "I wish my love was in a ire;" and poor Erskine's English lines may fol-w.

I inclose you, a "For a' that and a' that," which as never in print: it is a much superior song to ine. I have been told that it was composed by a dy.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

NOW SPRING HAS CLAD THE GROVE IN GREEN.

SCOTTISH SONG.

I.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,
And strew'd the lea wi' flowers:
The furrow'd waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers;
While ilka thing in nature join
Their sorrows to forego,
O why thus all alone are mine
The weary steps of woe?

II.

The trout within yon wimpling burn
Glides swift, a silver dart,
And safe beneath the shady thorn
Defies the angler's art:
My life was ance that careless stream,
That wanton trout was I;
But love, wi' unrelenting beam,
Has scorch'd my fountains dry.

III.

The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows,
Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows,
Was mine; till love has o'er me past,
And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the with'ring blast
My youth and joy consume.

IV.

The waken'd lav'rock warbling springs
And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blithe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye;
As little reckt I sorrow's power,
Until the flow'ry snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
Made me the thrall o' care.

V.

O had my fate been Greenland snows,
Or Afric's burning zone,
Wi' man and nature leagu'd my foes,
So Peggy ne'er I'd known!
The wretch whase doom is, "hope nae mair,"
What tongue his woes can tell!
Within whase bosom, save despair,
Nae kinder spirits dwell.

O BONNIE WAS YON ROSY BRIER.

I.

O bonnie was yon rosy brier,
That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;
And bonnie she, and ah, how dear!
It shaded frae the e'enin sun.

II.

Yon rosebuds in the morning dew
How pure, amang the leaves sae green;
But purer was the lover's vow
They witness'd in their shade yestreen.

III.

All in its rude and prickly bower,
That crimson rose, how sweet and fair!
But love is far a sweeter flower
Amid life's thorny path o' care.

IV.

The pathless wild, and wimpling burn,
Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine;
And I the world, nor wish, nor scorn,
Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris:—

TO CHLORIS.

'Tis Friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralizing muse.

Since thou, in all thy youth and charms,
Must bid the world adieu,
(A world 'gainst peace in constant arms),
To join the friendly few.

Since, thy gay morn of life o'ercast,
Chill came the tempest's lower;
(And ne'er misfortune's eastern blast
Did nip a fairer flower).

Since life's gay scenes must charm no more,
Still much is left behind;
Still nobler wealth hast thou in store—
The comforts of the mind!

Thine is the self-approving glow
On conscious honour's part;
And—dearest gift of heaven below—
Thine friendship's truest heart.

The joys refin'd of sense and taste,
With every Muse to rove:
And doubly were the poet blest
These joys could he improve.

Une bagatelle de l'amitie.—COILA.

[Of these three songs tradition has said little:—"This is no my ain lassie" is the happiest and indeed one of the happiest of the Poet's productions. He was acquainted with all the mysteries of love-making, and familiar with all the romance of trystings in lonely places, and meetings at forbidden hours, when age and circumspection were asleep. What can be finer or truer than these lines:—

"A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink by a' unseen,
But gleg as light are lovers' e'en,
When kind love is in the e'e."

The air to which this song is composed has words of its own; but they have no kindred feeling with the verses of Burns:—

> "This is no my ain house,
> I ken by the bigging o't;
> For bread and cheese are my door-cheeks,
> And pancakes the rigging o't."

The second song has some beautiful imagery; but it has also an air of labour about it: he prescribed it as a sort of poetic medicine for the heart of his friend Alexander Cunningham, which had suffered from the bright eyes and scornful tongue of an Edinburgh dame. It is no easy matter for a poet to load himself with another man's woes, and sing of them with a natural and deep emotion.

The third lyric takes Chloris for its theme, and speaks of the delights of mutual love, when the sun was setting, the dews beginning to fall, and the fragrance of the rose filling all the air. These were raptures into which the Poet threw himself, that he might fulfil his bargain with Thomson, and accommodate with rhyme a certain number of tunes.—ED.]

LXXX.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 3rd August, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR:

THIS will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! it is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter "O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," to the prosaic line, "Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad." I must be permitted to say that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray was the

resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P. S.—The lady's "For a' that, and a' that," is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

[Currie, in a note to this letter, says that he has heard the heroine of

"Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad,"

sing it in the very spirit of arch simplicity that it required, and the line,

"Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad,"

came gracefully from her lips. There is no doubt that Currie alludes to Mrs. Riddel; but the heroine was one of a lower degree than her of Woodlee-Park, nor had she any talent for verse or perhaps taste in poetry. But she was aware of the light which the genius of Burns shed on all to whom he was partial: and, moreover, it gave her a sort of distinction or pre-eminence among the rustic damsels of the vale.—Ed.]

No. LXXXI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

FORLORN MY LOVE, NO COMFORT NEAR.

Tune—"*Let me in this ae Night.*"

I.

FORLORN, my love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee, I wander here;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I most repine, love.
O wert thou, love, but near me;
But near, near, near me;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

II.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,
That blasts each bud of hope and joy;
And shelter, shade, nor home have I,
Save in those arms of thine, love.

III.

Cold, alter'd friendship's cruel part,
To poison fortune's ruthless dart,
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, love.

IV.

But dreary tho' the moments fleet,
O let me think we yet shall meet!
That only ray of solace sweet
Can on thy Chloris shine, love.
O wert thou, love, but near me;
But near, near, near me;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the speed of my Pegasus; but what say you to his bottom?

[The complaint of a lover of the coldness or the absence of his mistress is a favourite theme with lyric poets. But the bards of the olden and the bards of these our latter times sung with a difference. Modern minstrels keep a poor lover enduring the rain or the snow of a stormy night, while his inexorable mistress looks out at her window as cold as the northern star, and reproaches him with evil intentions and all manner of reprehensible thoughts. The eldern minstrels did not make their ladies of icicles: a little maidenly bashfulness was exhibited; but at last pity influenced the dame;—the doors were opened softly: green rushes were strewed on the floor and stair, to hinder the lover's steps to be heard; and he was conducted—past, perhaps, a mother's bed-side—or, more perilous still, a maiden aunt's—to a secret chamber, into which we shall

not attempt to force our way. An old song, to the same air to which this song is written, gives a rude picture of such interviews:—

"O I'll come stealing saftly in,
And cannilie make little din;
To keep me here wad be a sin,
Amang the wintry rain, jo.

"Cast off the shoon frae aff yere feet,
Cast back the door unto the weet;
Syne to my chamber craftily creep,
But ne'er come back again, jo.

"O in he crept sae cannilie,
O in he staw sae privilie;
Nane save my sel' could hear or see—
Then he was a' my ain, jo."

We cannot follow the old poet farther.—ED.]

LXXXII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

LAST MAY A BRAW WOOER.

Tune—"*The Lothian Lassie.*"

I.

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe, believe me,
The deuce gae wi'm, to believe me!

II.

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,
And vow'd for my love he was dying;
I said he might die when he liked for Jean,
The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgie me for lying!

III.

A weel-stocked mailen—himsel' for the laird—
And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kenn'd it, or car'd,
But thought I may hae waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might hae waur offers.

IV.

But what wad ye think? In a fortnight or less—
The deil tak his taste to gae near her!
He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess,
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her, could bear her,
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her.

V.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there!
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

VI.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Least neebors might say I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

VII.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recovered her hearin',
And how her new shoon fit her auld shackl't feet,
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin'!

VIII.

He begged, for Gudesake, I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
So, e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

FRAGMENT.

CHLORIS.

Tune—"*Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*"

I.

Why, why tell thy lover,
Bliss he never must enjoy:
Why, why undeceive him,
And give all his hopes the lie?

II.

O why, while fancy, raptured, slumbers,
Chloris, Chloris all the theme,
Why, why wouldst thou cruel
Wake thy lover from his dream?

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ache, so have not a word to spare.

[The alterations made by Burns in his songs are far from numerous. He generally allowed them to remain as he first sent them to the world: to have made experiments on verses which became popular as soon as known would have been injudicious; yet, at times, a fit of emendation came upon him, and he altered some of his cleverest songs. Among these we may mention the one beginning

"Last May a braw wooer came down the lang glen."

He not only made many changes in the words, but he even altered the scene where the little lively drama is laid. In the original copy sent to Thomson, one of the lines in the fourth verse runs thus :—

"He up the Gateslack to my black cousin Bess."

To Gateslack, as well as to Dalgarnock in the next verse, Thomson objected: they were not sufficiently soft and suitable for the voice. To which Burns replied, "Gateslack is the name of a particular place—a kind of passage up among the Lowther hills on the confines of this county. Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial ground. However, let the first line run

'He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess.'"

"It is always a pity," says Currie, "to throw out anything that gives locality to our Poet's verses." In this case, to have expelled Dalgarnock would have been an injury. It is the very place where Old Mortality is represented by Scott repairing cherubs' heads and defaced inscriptions on the grave-stones of the Cameronian worthies. It is one of the loveliest spots, too, on Nithside. The kirk and kirk-yard belonged to the old parish of Dalgarnock when it was incorporated with Closeburn.

the affections of the people linger about the spot wi their fathers' ashes lie, and it is still used as a p of interment.

The reader will observe the nature of the alterat which Burns thought this song required, by compa the first version communicated to the Museum, t that sent to Thomson :—

Air—"*The Lothian Lassie.*"

"Ae day a braw wooer came down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
But I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi' him to believe me, believe me,
The deuce gae wi' him to believe me.

"A weel stocket mailen, himself o't the laird,
An' bridal aff hand was the proffer;
I never loot on that I kenned or I cared,
But I thought I might get a waur offer, waur offer,
But I thought I might get a waur offer.

"He spake o' the darts o' my bonnie black een
And O for my love he was dien';
But I said he might die when he likit for Jean,
The Gude forgie' me for lien', for lien',
The Gude forgie' me for lien'.

"But what do ye think! in a fortnight or less—
The deil's in his taste to gae near her!
He's down to the castle to black cousin Bess,
Think how, the jade! I could endure her, endure her,
Think how, the jade! I could endure her.

"An' a' the niest week, as I fretted wi' care,
I gade to the tryste o' Dalgarlock,
And wha but my braw fickle wooer was there,
Wha glowered as if he'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
Wha glowered as if he'd seen a warlock.

"But owre my left shouther I gied him a blink,
Lest neighbours should think I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vowed that I was a dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vowed that I was a dear lassie.

"I spier'd for my cousin fou couthie an' sweet,
An' if she'd recovered her hearin',
An' how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet,
Gude safe us! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
Gude safe us! how he fell a swearin'.

"He begged me for Gudesake that I'd be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
And, just to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I will wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I will wed him to-morrow."

This is, in some respects, a better version of the song than the copy sent to Thomson. The third line in the seventh verse of the latter is altogether wrong, and cannot surely be as Burns wrote it. It is nonsense to ask

"And how her new shoon fit her auld shakl't feet?"

The satiric allusion is preserved in Johnson's version:—

"And how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet."

"Auld shoon," in the language of rustic wooing, represent a discarded lover. Thus, in the old song,—

"Ye may tell the coof that gets her
That he gets but my auld shoon."

It was this—and well it might—which made the wooer fall "a swearin':"—the transposition, too, of the verses lets us a little into the character of the lady: she puts that sarcastic question after bestowing the blink "owre her left shouther:"—she was desirous of showing her lover that the conquest was not quite achieved.—ED.]

No. LXXXIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

3d June, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR:

YOUR English verses to "Let me in this ae night," are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the "Lothian Lassie" is a master-piece for its humour and naïveté. The fragment for the "Caledonian Hunt" is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the Poet; but, nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord make us thankful.

[It was not without reason that Thomson wrote in this gentle and conciliatory strain: the Poet was suffering from ill health and depressed fortune, and that slow consuming illness which arrested him in his bright career was more than beginning to manifest itself. To Thomson he seems not to have unbosomed himself so fully as he did to Johnson.—"You should have heard," he thus writes to the latter, "from me long ago; but, over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that I

have almost hung my harp on the willow trees. Give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddel's, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever. Thank you for the copies of my volunteer ballad, 'Does haughty Gaul invasion threat.' Our friend Clarke has done, indeed, well: 'tis chaste and beautiful. I have not met with any thing that has pleased me so much. You know I am no connoisseur, but that I am an amateur will be allowed me."

The five following songs were communicated about this period to Johnson. They help to preserve the train of the Poet's musings unbroken, and shew what he was about during the hours that ill health, lowness of spirits, and a dread of the darkening future gave him a respite.—ED.]

THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

I.

Oh! I am come to the low countrie,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Without a penny in my purse,
To buy a meal to me.

II.

It was na sae in the Highland hills,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Nae woman in the country wide
Sae happy was as me.

III.

For then I had a score o' kye,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Feeding on yon hills so high,
And giving milk to me.

IV.

And there I had three score o' yowes,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Skipping on yon bonnie knowes,
And casting woo' to me.

V.

I was the happiest of a' the clan,
Sair, sair may I repine;
For Donald was the brawest lad,
And Donald he was mine.

VI.

Till Charlie Stewart cam' at last,
Sae far to set us free;
My Donald's arm was wanted then,
For Scotland and for me.

VII.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell,
Right to the wrang did yield:
My Donald and his country fell
Upon Culloden's field.

VIII.

Oh! I am come to the low countrie,
Och-on, och-on, och-rie!
Nae woman in the world wide
Sae wretched now as me.

[This song is said to be a homely version of a Highland lament for the ruin which followed the rebellion of the "forty-five." Burns heard it sung in one of his northern excursions, and begged a translation. It gives no exaggerated picture of the desolation wrought in the north by the Duke of Cumberland, whose atro-

cities made the prophecy of Peden be credited—" day is at hand when a man may ride fifty miles in S land, and not see a reeking house, nor hear a cro cock." To subdue and root out rebellion was a duty; " Butcher Willie," as the peasantry with great prop called the Duke, in accomplishing this, was savage remorseless. Smollett, who lived in those melanc times, has given us a lasting picture of the suffering his country in his inimitable "Tears of Scotland:" has Sir Walter Scott spared either sympathy for sufferers, or reproaches on him who was so want barbarous. The castles and homes of the rebels given to the flames; their cattle driven away, and t wives and children were to be seen roaming, hous and famishing, among the lonely glens and des moors of the north. The execution, too, of those t in arms was beyond all belief barbarous: they hung by the neck for five minutes, cut down before were dead—their bosoms opened, and their hearts out: several were observed by the bystanders to st gle with the executioner in performing the last pa this terrible tragedy. Human nature shudders at proceedings; yet the public heart and eye of Lo must have been hardened that endured the exhibitic the ghastly heads of Lovat, Balmerino, and Kilmarn on Temple Bar, for forty years and more !—Ed.]

TO GENERAL DUMOURIER.

A PARODY ON ROBIN ADAIR.

I.

ou're welcome to despots, Dumourier;
ou're welcome to despots, Dumourier;
How does Dampiere do?
Aye, and Bournonville, too?
'hy did they not come along with you, Dumourier?

II.

will fight France with you, Dumourier;
will fight France with you, Dumourier;
I will fight France with you,
I will take my chance with you;
y my soul I'll dance a dance with you, Dumourier.

III.

hen let us fight about, Dumourier;
hen let us fight about, Dumourier;
Then let us fight about,
Till freedom's spark is out,
hen we'll be damn'd, no doubt, Dumourier.

[One day Burns happened to be in the King's Arms Inn, Dumfries, when he overheard a stranger vindicating the defection of General Dumourier from the ranks of the French army. The Poet presently began to croon words to the tune of Robin Adair, in a low tone of voice: on being asked what he was about, he said he was giving a welcome to General Dumourier, and repeated the verses as they are printed. Though Burns, in common with almost all mankind, commended the principles of the great reformers of France, he was not slack in deploring the follies and the crimes which they proceeded to commit. In a mood between jest and earnest, he wrote a song such as he supposed Joseph Gerald, of the British Convention, might with propriety sing to his associates: a verse or two will be sufficient to show that in poetic merit it has no right to be named—as it has been—with Bruce's address to his men at Bannockburn:—

"Why should we idly waste our prime
Repeating our oppressions?
Come, rouse to arms, 'tis now the time
To punish past transgressions.
'Tis said that kings can do no wrong—
Their murderous deeds deny it;
And, since from us their power is sprung,
We have a right to try it.
Now each true patriot's song shall be,
Welcome death or libertie."

The Poet proceeds in a strain—of which it is as well, perhaps, to repeat but a part—to advise the princes of the earth how to comport themselves, to promise prelates translation by means of the gibbet, and to threaten unrighteous judges and corrupt juries with death:—

"Proud bishops next we will translate,
Among priest-crafted martyrs;
The guillotine on peers shall wait,
And knights shall hang in garters;

Those despots long have trod us down,
And judges are their engines—
Such wretched minions of a crown
Demand the people's vengeance."

Having purified the earth, he concludes in a true Spencean style:—

"The golden age we'll then revive,
Each man will be a brother;
In harmony we all shall live,
And share the earth together.
In virtue trained, enlightened youth
Will love each fellow-creature;
And future years shall prove the truth
That man is good by nature.
Then let us toast, with three times three,
The reign of peace and liberty."

Such were the speculations of the sons of men in those days; but there were dragons in the way.—ED.]

PEG-A-RAMSEY.

Tune—"*Cauld is the e'enin' blast.*"

I.

Cauld is the e'enin' blast
O' Boreas o'er the pool,
And dawin' it is dreary
When birks are bare at Yule.

II.

O bitter blaws the e'enin' blast
When bitter bites the frost,
And in the mirk and dreary drift
The hills and glens are lost.

III.

Ne'er sae murky blew the night
That drifted o'er the hill,
But a bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey
Gat grist to her mill.

["Bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey" is as renowned in the amatory songs of the north as

"French Joan or English Mall"

are in the martial ballads of France and England. That she was beautiful and condescending, the fragments of old song still bear evidence :—

"O bonnie Peg-a-Ramsey,
As a half-blin' man may see,
Has a sweet and sonsie look,
And a gleg and glenting e'e."—ED.]

THERE WAS A BONNIE LASS.

I.

There was a bonnie lass,
And a bonnie, bonnie lass,
And she lo'ed her bonnie laddie dear;
Till war's loud alarms
Tore her laddie frae her arms,
Wi' mony a sigh and tear.

II.

Over sea, over shore,
Where the cannons loudly roar,
He still was a stranger to fear:
And nocht could him quell,
Or his bosom assail,
But the bonnie lass he lo'ed sae dear.

[Burns sometimes commenced a song, and, like Milton, "nothing pleased with what he had done," threw it aside, and addressed himself to some other subject or air, to which

"Words came skelpin' rank and file."

This is one of those unfinished snatches—yet not unworthy of preservation.—ED.]

O MALLY'S MEEK, MALLY'S SWEET.

I.

O Mally's meek, Mally's sweet,
Mally's modest and discreet,
Mally's rare, Mally's fair,
Mally's every way complete.
As I was walking up the street,
A barefit maid I chanc'd to meet;
But O the road was very hard
For that fair maiden's tender feet.

II.

It were mair meet that those fine feet
Were weel lac'd up in silken shoon,
And 'twere more fit that she should sit
Within yon chariot gilt aboon.

III.

Her yellow hair, beyond compare,
Comes trinkling down her swan-white neck:
And her two eyes, like stars in skies,
Would keep a sinking ship frae wreck.
O Mally's meek, Mally's sweet,
Mally's modest and discreet,
Mally's rare, Mally's fair,
Mally's every way complete.

["O Mally's meek, and Mally's sweet," stands in the Museum the last of all the communications of Burns. The Poet one day, it is said, was walking along the High-street of Dumfries, when he met a young woman from the country, who, with her shoes and stockings packed thriftily up, and her petticoats kilted,

"Which did sweetly shaw
Her straight bare legs that whiter were than snaw,"

was proceeding towards the Galloway side of the Nith. This sight, by no means so unusual then as now, influenced the muse of Burns, and the result was this exquisite lyric. The last verse is uncommonly happy. It would appear that her name was not unknown to the Poet, but—

"For reasons best kent to himself,"

he has communicated no more than what the verses relate.—ED.]

No. LXXXIV.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

5th Feb. 1796.

"O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye waukin, I would wit?"

THE pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful! Am I never to hear from you again? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish "married to immortal verse." We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now naturalized and reckoned our own good subjects: indeed, we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan: what is your opinion of this?

[Burns had made a pause in his correspondence from June 1795 to February 1796; and Thomson feeling alarm, as much for the Poet's sake as for the "dozen of Scotch and Irish airs" which he wished "wedded to

immortal verse," wrote to make inquiries. Something in the tone of the letter, and the circumstance of pressing a sick man to write songs, seem to indicate that Thomson did not imagine that Burns was in a dangerous state. Nor is this surprising:—he was wildly gay or gloomily downcast by fits and starts: Professor Walker, who had an interview with him in the latter end of the year, failed to perceive in his fiercet one of conversation, and the almost convulsive resolution to abide by the wine, the presence of that twofold sickness of mind and body which was soon to carry him to the grave. He was, nevertheless, to use the words of a Scottish song,

"Fading in his place;"

and his wearing away was observed by all who took any interest in his fortunes.—Ed.]

No. LXXXV.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

February, 17, 1796.

MANY thanks, my dear Sir, for your handson elegant present, to Mrs. Burns, and for my remai ing volume of Peter Pindar.—Peter is a delightf fellow, and a first favourite of mine. I am mu pleased with your idea of publishing a collection our songs in octavo, with etchings. I am extreme willing to lend every assistance in my power. Tl Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task finding verses for.

I have, already, you know, equipt three wi words, and the other day I strung up a kind rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which admire much :—

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

Tune—"*Balinamona Ora.*"

I.

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms:
O, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher;
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
The nice yellow guineas for me.

II.

ɔur beauty's a flower, in the morning that blows,
ɑd withers the faster, the faster it grows;
ɑt the rapturous charm o' the bonnie green knowes,
k spring they're new deckit wi' bonnie white yowes.

III.

ɑd e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,
he brightest o' beauty may cloy when possest;
ɑt the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie imprest,
he langer ye hae them—the mair they're carest.
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher;
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
The nice yellow guineas for me.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish ɪgagement. In my by-past songs, I dislike one ing; the name Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious ɪme of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this, and some things se, in my next: I have more amendments to proɔse.—What you once mentioned of "flaxen locks" just: they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty.—Of this also again—God bless you!

[Burns, it is believed, not only determined to remove Chloris with the flaxen tresses, and Anna with the golden locks, from his songs, but to eschew their allurements and avoid their company. He began, when it was too late, to perceive that, in erring against domestic ties and forsaking his household gods, he was sinning not only against his own fame, but furnishing his heart with matter for future repentance and remorse. In the complete revisal which he desired to give his songs, he had no wish to abate the humour or lessen even the occasional levities of expression in which he indulged. His aim appears to have been to change foreign names for native ones, and rely upon the Jeans, the Marys, the Phemies, the Ediths, and the Berthas of his own isle for exercising influence over the hearts of men. He could not but feel, too, that some of his latter songs were written less from his own emotions than to accommodate the vacant airs with words: this had led him into repetitions of sentiment and imagery. Whatever his resolutions were respecting his songs or himself, he lived not to fulfil them.—ED.]

No. LXXXVI.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

YOUR "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher" is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the Gentle Shepherd, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

No. LXXXVII.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

ALAS! my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! "By Babel streams I have sat and wept," almost ever since I wrote you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness; and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

> "Say wherefore has an all-indulgent heaven
> Light to the comfortless and wretched given?"

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. "Woo'd and married an' a'," is admirable! The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire, "Turnimspike." What I like least is, "Jenny said to Jocky." Besides the female being in her appearance * * * * * if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches

taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a sad subject!

[The "howff" of which Burns speaks was a small, comfortable tavern, situated in the mouth of the Globe close, and it held at that time the rank as third among the houses of public accommodation in Dumfries. The excellence of the drink and the attentions of the proprietor were not, however, all its attractions "Anna with the gowden locks" was one of the ministering damsels of the establishment: customers loved to be served by one who was not only cheerful, but whose charms were celebrated by the Bard of Kyle. On one of the last visits paid by the Poet, the wine of the "howff" was more than commonly strong—or, served by Anna, it went more glibly over than usual; and when he rose to begone, he found he could do no more than keep his balance. The night was frosty and the hour late: the Poet sat down on the steps of a door between the tavern and his own house, fell asleep, and did not awaken till he was almost dead with cold. To this exposure his illness has been imputed; and no doubt it contributed, with disappointed hope and insulted pride, to bring him to an early grave.—ED.]

No. LXXXVIII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathise in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then, it is to be hoped, you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P. S.—Mrs. Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

[On this gold seal the Poet caused his coat of arms to be engraven:—*viz.*, a small bush; a bird singing; the legend "wood-notes wild," with the motto "better hae a wee bush than nae bield." This precious relic is now in the proper keeping of the Poet's brother-in-law, Robert Armour, of Old 'Change, London.—ED.]

No. LXXXIX.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

My dear Sir:

I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired: "Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney," but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

JESSY.

Tune—"*Here's a health to them that's awa.*"

I.

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

II.

Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!

III.

I mourn through the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms:
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lockt in thy arms—Jessy!

IV.

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree?—Jessy!
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

["In the letter to Thomson," says Currie, "the three first stanzas only are given, and it was supposed that the Poet had gone no further: among his manuscripts, however, the fourth stanza was found, which completes this exquisite song, the last finished offspring of his muse." The heroine is Jessie Lewars, now Mrs. Thomson, of Dumfries: her tender attentions soothed the last days of the departing Poet, and if immortality in song can be considered a recompence, she has been rewarded.—Ed.]

No. XC.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

THIS will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you chuse, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business!

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

[It has already been intimated that Burns desired to re-peruse and amend his songs. He began to feel that he was producing too many—and that he was introducing

names which sounded strangely in native ears. With what success he would have carried on his scheme of emendation it is impossible to say. This letter was written on the 12th of July, and expresses some hope that summer heat would bring health to him: his letter to Johnson, on the 4th of the same month, is a melancholy one:—"You may probably think," he says, "that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more; though, alas! I fear it. This protracting slow-consuming illness which hangs over me will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well nigh reached his middle career, and will turn o'er the Poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment."—Ed.]

No. XCI.

BURNS TO G. THOMSON.

Brow, on the Solway-frith, 12th July, 1796.

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel wretch of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise, and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on "Rothemurche" this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS.

Tune—"*Rothemurche.*"

I.

Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do?
Full well thou knows't I love thee, dear!
Could'st thou to malice lend an ear!
O! did not love exclaim "Forbear,
Nor use a faithful lover so."

II.

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Those wonted smiles, O let me share;
And by thy beauteous self I swear
No love but thine my heart shall know.
Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Crystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do?

["These verses," says Currie, "and the letter enclosing them, are written in a character that marks the feeble state of Burns's bodily strength. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any such necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But about this time (nine days before

ath), his reason began at times to be unsettled, and orrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination.'* ve in the Life of the Poet asserted that he was in poverty before he died, and that sometimes, in the se of the spring of 1796, his family were all but ing bread. Those who say he had good friends nd him seem not to know that he had a soul too d to solicit help, and to forget that there are hearts e world ready to burst before they beg. The five ds for which he solicited Thomson were to meet lemands of David Williamson, to whom he owed rice of the cloth of his volunteer regimentals—the ey should have been paid in April: and the ten ds which he requested, and by return of post ob- d, from his cousin, James Burness, grandfather of tenant Burness the Eastern Traveller, was for his wife, about to be confined in child-bed. It is not known he applied to any one else, and he would not have ied to either his cousin or to Thomson, had he not sorely pressed: the fact of his being in want was vn to all his neighbours and admitted by himself.

this song—the last he was to measure in this d—his thoughts wandered to Charlotte Hamilton, the banks of the Devon. Well might he exclaim :—

"Couldst thou to malice lend an ear?"—ED.]

No. XCII.

G. THOMSON TO BURNS.

14th July, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR:

EVER since I received your melancholy letters by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and, with great pleasure, inclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you, in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour: remember Pope published the Iliad by

subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to "Rothemurche" will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

[The dying Poet wrote entreatingly for five pounds, and Thomson sent the exact sum which he requested, from inability to send more: or, as he avers, from a dread of giving offence to the sensitive mind of Burns. It would have been as well had the sum been larger; but one cannot well see how Thomson deserves censure for doing that, and no more, which his correspondent requested him to do. Professor Walker, a man little inclined to irony, says that, on this subject, "the delicate mind of Mr. Thomson is at peace with itself."

"Therefore there need no more be said here."

Since this volume went to the press, Mrs. Burns, the bonnie Jean of many an imperishable song, has passed from among us, and now lies side by side with "the plighted husband of her youth." She was a dutiful—nay, generous wife, an affectionate mother, and a good neighbour. One word of reproach was never uttered by her lips to Robert Burns: and when their narrowing fortunes required great economy, she was the first to propose that his illegitimate daughter should be taken under his roof. She treated the girl like one of her own. She sang Scottish songs with much grace and taste: she danced neatly and with spirit: though not much of a

reader, she was conversant enough with Scottish poetry to enable her to talk about it: and though not gifted in the way that one might desire the wife of such a poet to be, she was not without a ready answer to a forward speech.

It is to be lamented that, in raising the monument to the memory of Burns, it was found necessary to meddle with his grave: and it is more deeply to be regretted that, in interring his widow, his dust has been again disturbed. How the bright eyes of the illustrious poet would have lightened had he dreamed of such profanation! In his dying moments he was alarmed lest the awkward squad of volunteers would be employed to fire over him. Alas! that was not to be the worst.

END OF VOL. V.

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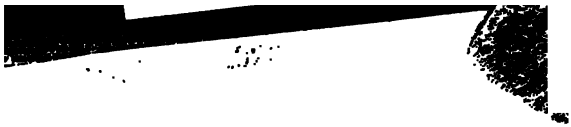
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